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THEN

1921-1935

a selection of articles, stories and poems reprinted from NOW AND THEN together with certain illustrations and other work now printed for the first time by Jonathan Cape

1921-1935

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THEN AND NOW

1921-1935

THEN AND NOW

A Selection of articles, stories & poems, taken from the first fifty numbers of 'Now & Then' 1921-35

together with

Some illustrations, and certain other work now printed for the first time

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Thirty Bedford Square London
1935

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INTRODUCTION

This little book is a commemoration, not an obituary. *Now and Then*, the house organ from which its contents are mainly drawn, is now fourteen years old; and the pages which follow are intended to commemorate at once a birthday, a successful experiment, and a reasonable prospect of longevity.

The publishing firm of Jonathan Cape was in its infancy when the first number of *Now and Then* appeared in the spring of 1921. It set out, experimentally, to offer an occasional survey of the books appearing over that new imprint. A further aim was to create, so far as such a thing is possible, a personal link between the publisher and the readers of his books, and to emphasize that elusive but determining element, the individual character of the publishing firm. The unbroken continuance of the magazine is evidence that it has not altogether failed to fulfil these hopes.

Its circulation has grown steadily; and this not in numbers only, but in geographical distribution — its list of subscribers shows names in nearly every country of the world. And we may be pardoned for emphasizing the significance of this increasing body of readers, because *Now and Then* is not sent out broadcast as an advertising circular is sent. The magazine is despatched only to individual readers who either subscribe or express a definite and continued wish to receive it. Its present circulation of 25,000, therefore, has no appreciable percentage of waste-paper-basket copies.

This, of course, is important to the publisher, and no less to the authors for whom he publishes: because *Now and Then* is avowedly an instrument of advertising, and one very important element in advertising is to make sure that you are addressing a willing and suitable listener. As part of the machinery for adequately drawing attention to the books issued by Jonathan Cape, *Now and Then* has proved its worth

over and over again. We are, indeed, strongly inclined to believe that in the long run it attracts and holds more attention than does a great deal of the 'heavy bombardment' or 'smash-and-grab' press advertising which has characterized publishing activity during the past few years.

In the fifty issues of *Now and Then* which have covered these fourteen years, the individual character of the firm of Jonathan Cape has been reflected. The wide scope of the books published, at first from Eleven Gower Street, and now from Thirty Bedford Square, has always provided ample material for descriptive and critical articles. In fact, the magazine has in its way crystallized the interests and the literary standards of the firm, and to look back through its file is to view in summary a record of the contribution which 'Cape books' have made to current English literature. The present volume, we believe, represents a fairly proportioned abridgment of that record. About three-quarters of its contents have been chosen and reprinted direct from the pages of *Now and Then*; the rest consists of new articles specially written by valued contributors, presenting aspects of the firm's activities and interests which seemed to call for separate consideration. *Now and Then* will continue, three times a year, to survey the new books published by Jonathan Cape, and will do so with the help of many of the writers whose names have lent it lustre during the past fourteen years, and, it is hoped, of others no less distinguished. It will continue, as it began, with the aim of stimulating the interest of readers, here, there and everywhere, in authors whose work is published over the Cape imprint, and in the belief that this can be done, not by extravagant claims or trumpet-blasts, but by balanced appreciation and a range of critical opinions as wide as most of the personalities and ideas which they are called upon to estimate.

April 1935

DR. DOLITTLE

By

HUGH WALPOLE

There are some of us now reaching middle age who discover themselves to be lamenting the past in one respect if in none other, that there are no books written now for children comparable with those of thirty years ago. I say written *for* children because the new psychological business of writing about them as though they were small pills or hatched in some especially scientific method is extremely popular to-day. Writing for children rather than about them is very difficult, as everybody who has tried it knows. It can only be done, I am convinced, by somebody having a great deal of the child in his own outlook and sensibilities. Such was the author of *The Little Duke* and *The Dove in the Eagle's Nest*, such the author of *The Flatiron for a Farthing*, and *The Story of a Short Life*. Such, above all, the author of *Alice in Wonderland*. Grown-ups imagine that they can do the trick by adopting baby language and talking down to their very critical audience. There never was a greater mistake. The imagination of the author must be a child's imagination and yet maturely consistent, so that the White Queen in *Alice*, for instance, is seen just as a child would see her, but she continues always herself through all her distressing adventures. The supreme touch of the white rabbit pulling on his white gloves as he hastens is again absolutely the child's vision, but the white rabbit, as guide and introducer to Alice's adventures, belongs to mature grown insight.

Geniuses are rare, and, without being at all an undue praiser of times past, one can say without hesitation that until the appearance of Hugh Lofting, the successor of Miss Yonge, Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Gatty and Lewis Carroll had not appeared. I remember the delight with which some six months ago I picked up the first 'Dolittle' book in a bookshop in America. One of Mr. Lofting's pictures was quite enough for me. The picture that I lighted upon when I first opened the book was one of the monkeys making a chain with their arms across the gulf. Then I looked further and discovered Bumpo reading fairy stories to himself. And then I looked again and there was a picture of John Dolittle's house.

But pictures are not enough, although most authors draw so badly that if one of them happens to have the genius for line that Mr. Lofting shows, there must be, one feels, something in his writing as well. There is. You cannot read the first paragraph of the book, which begins in the right way, 'Once upon a time', without knowing that Mr. Lofting believes in his story quite as much as he expects you to. That is the first essential for a storyteller. Then you discover as you read on that he has the right eye for the right detail. What child's inquiring mind could resist this intriguing sentence to be found on the second page of the book:

> 'Besides the gold fish in the pond at the bottom of his garden, he had rabbits in the pantry, white mice in his piano, a squirrel in the linen closet and a hedgehog in the cellar.'

And then when you read a little further you will discover that the Doctor is not merely a peg on whom to hang exciting adventures, but that he is himself a man of original and lively character. He is a very kindly, generous man, and anyone who has ever written stories will know that it is much more difficult to make kindly, generous characters interesting than

unkindly, mean ones. But Dolittle is interesting. It is not that he is quaint, but that he is wise and knows what he is about. The reader, however young, who meets him gets very soon a sense that if he were in trouble, not necessarily medical, he would go to Dolittle and ask his advice about it. Dolittle seems to extend his hand from the page and grasp that of his reader, and I can see him going down the centuries a kind of Pied Piper with thousands of children at his heels. But not only is he a darling and alive and credible, but his creator has managed to invest everybody else in the book with the same kind of life.

Now this business of giving life to animals, making them talk and behave like human beings, is an extremely difficult one. Lewis Carroll absolutely conquered the difficulties, but I am not sure that anyone after him until Hugh Lofting has really managed the trick; even in such a masterpiece as *The Wind in the Willows* we're not quite convinced. John Dolittle's friends are convincing because their creator never forces them to desert their own characteristics. Polynesia, for instance, is natural from first to last. She really does care about the Doctor, but she cares as a bird would care, having always some place to which she is going when her business with her friends is over. And when Mr. Lofting invents fantastic animals he gives them a kind of credible possibility which is extraordinarily convincing. It will be impossible for anyone who has read this book not to believe in the existence of the pushmipullyu, who would be credible enough even were there no drawing of it, but the picture settles the matter of his truth once and for all.

In fact, this book is a work of genius, and, as always with works of genius, it is difficult to analyse the elements that have gone to make it. There is poetry here and fantasy and humour, a little pathos, but above all a number of creations in whose existence everybody must believe, whether they be

children of four or old men of ninety or prosperous bankers of forty-five. I don't know how Mr. Lofting has done it; I don't suppose he knows himself. There it is — the first real children's classic since *Alice*.

[1923]

HEART AND HEAD

By

MONK GIBBON

As lover's light-laid, lief-held hand, so heart
Held helm once, gave guidance wholly gay,
Gay guidance, gracious guidance, all a part
Of heart's whole-hearted here-had holiday.
Watch her, warm heart, winged heart, wide heart,
as now she goes
Waylaying whom she wish and where she will;
All friendly, even sorrow, whom she knows
But nodding, tears the foil to laughter's fill.

Till one day head said, 'Heart, enough; leave limb
To its own lord to rule, loose hold of hand.
Seek reason's path, albeit twilight-dim,
Run no more races on such trackless sand,'
Her joy was checked. She rose and followed him
Into that lonely and most silent land.

'The architecture was very unusual'
An illustration from *DR. DOLITTLE'S ZOO*
by Hugh Lofting

MARY WEBB'S 'PRECIOUS BANE'

By
THE RT. HON. STANLEY BALDWIN

Mary Meredith, the author of *Precious Bane*, was born in the little village of Leighton, near Cressage, under the Wrekin, on March 25th, 1881, and died at St. Leonard's, October 8th, 1927, and was buried at Shrewsbury She was the daughter of George Edward Meredith, a schoolmaster of Welsh descent, by his marriage with Sarah Alice Scott, daughter of an Edinburgh doctor of the clan of Sir Walter Scott. She was the eldest of six children and spent her early girlhood at 'The Grange' — a small country house near Much Wenlock; from twelve to twenty-one she lived at Stanton-on-Hine Heath, six miles north-east of Shrewsbury, and for the next ten years at 'The Old Mill', Meole Brace, a mile from Shrewsbury. In 1912 Mary Meredith married Mr. Henry Bertram Law Webb, a Cambridge graduate and a native of Shropshire. After two years at Weston-super-Mare, where Mr. Webb had a post in a school, Mr. and Mrs. Webb returned to Shropshire, living at Pontesbury and Lythe Hill, working as market-gardeners and selling the produce at their own stall in Shrewsbury market. Mrs. Webb had written stories and poems from childhood, but it was at this period that she seriously turned her mind to writing novels. A volume of essays on nature, *The Spring of Joy*, and three novels, *The Golden Arrow*, *Gone to Earth*, and *The House in Dormer Forest* had been published before she came to live in

London in 1921. *Seven for a Secret* followed in 1922, and *Precious Bane* was published in 1924. It was awarded the Femina-Vie Heureuse Prize for 1924-25, given annually for the best work of imagination in prose or verse descriptive of English life by an author who had not attained sufficient recognition.

I am indebted for these biographical particulars to Mr. Webb, to whom *Precious Bane* is inscribed.

I never met Mary Webb and knew nothing of her work until I read *Precious Bane* at Christmas, 1926. I am glad to think that I was in time to send a few words of appreciation to the author.

The stupid urban view of the countryside as dull receives a fresh and crushing answer in the books of Mary Webb. All the novels except *Precious Bane* are set in the hill country of South-West Shropshire, between the Clee Hills and the Breiddens, and between Shrewsbury and Ludlow. The scene of *Precious Bane* is the country of North Shropshire meres — the Ellesmere district, but the dialect is that of South Shropshire. It is the country of the Severn lowlands and of isolated upland ridges where Celt and Saxon have met and mingled for centuries. To the passing traveller it is inhabited by an uncommunicative population dwelling among places with names like Stedmont and Squilver and Stiperstone, Nipstone and Nind. There are, of course, the old castles and timbered black and white houses for the motoring visitors. But to the imaginative child brought up among the ploughlands and pools and dragonflies there is 'a richness on the world, so it looked what our parson used to call sumptuous'. It is this richness which Mary Webb was and felt as a girl and remembered with lyrical intensity as a woman.

She has interlaced with this natural beauty the tragic drama of a youth whose whole being is bent on toil and thrift and worldly success only to find himself defeated on the morrow

of the harvest by the firing of the cornricks by the father of his lover. The dour figure of Gideon Sarn is set against that of his gentle sister, Prudence, who tells the tale. She is a woman flawed with a hare-shotten lip and cursed in the eyes of the neighbours until her soul's loveliness is discerned by Kester Woodseaves, the weaver. And so there comes to her at the end of the story the love which is 'the peace to which all hearts do strive'.

The strength of the book is not in its insight into human character, though that is not lacking. Nor does it lie in the inevitability with which the drama is unfolded and the sin of an all-absorbing and selfish ambition punished. It lies in the fusion of the elements of nature and man, as observed in this remote countryside by a woman even more alive to the changing moods of nature than to those of man. Almost any page at random will furnish an illustration of the blending of human passion with the fields and skies.

> 'So they rode away, and the sound of the people died till it was less than the hum of a midge, and there was nothing but a scent of rosemary, and warm sun, and the horse lengthening its stride towards the mountains, whence came the air of morning.'

One reviewer compared *Precious Bane* to a sampler stitched through long summer evenings in the bay window of a remote farmhouse. And sometimes writers of Welsh and Border origin, like William Morris, have had their work compared to old tapestries. But while these comparisons suggest something of the harmonies of colour they fail to convey the emotional force which glows in these pages. Nature to Mary Webb was not a pattern on a screen. Her sensibility is so acute and her power over words so sure and swift, that one who reads some passages in Whitehall has almost the physical sense of being in Shropshire cornfields.

Precious Bane is a revelation not of unearthly but of earthly beauty in one bit of the England of Waterloo, the Western edge, haunted with the shadows of superstition, the legendary lore and fantasy of neighbours on the Border, differing in blood and tongue. This mingling of peoples and traditions and turns of speech and proverbial wisdom is what Mary Webb saw with the eye of the mind as she stood at her stall in Shrewsbury market, fastened in her memory and fashioned for us in the little parcel of novels which is her legacy to literature.

[1928]

'T. E. LAWRENCE'

By
W. H. AUDEN

If this article is very little about Captain Liddell Hart's book, it is because he has presented his matter so clearly and convincingly that the reader forgets all about him. Excepting the almost mythical *Seven Pillars* there is no better account of the Arabian campaign than this, and no more living portrait of Lawrence: nor is there likely to be.

Thinking of Lawrence, I am reminded of two stories; the first Turgenev's *A Desperate Character*, particularly the incident of the hero found sitting in an inn with the notice in front of him 'Anyone who wishes to flip a nobleman on the nose may do so for two roubles', and how he nearly killed one who tried to take two flips for his money. The second, which I read I believe in MacDougal's *Abnormal Psychology* was the statement made by a man after he had cut the throats of his wife and family. 'No, I am not the truly strong man. The truly strong man lounges about in bars and does nothing at all.'

To me Lawrence's life is an allegory of the transformation of the Truly Weak Man into the Truly Strong Man, an answer to the question 'How shall the self-conscious man be saved?' and the moral seems to be this; 'self-consciousness is an asset, in fact the only friend of our progress. We can't go back on it. But its demands on our little person and his appetites are so great that most of us, terrified, try to escape

or make terms with it, which is fatal. As a pursuer it is deadly.' Only the continuous annihilation of the self by the Identity, to use Blake's terminology, will bring to us to the freedom we wish for, or in Lawrence's own phrase, 'Happiness comes in absorption'.

But a misinterpretation of absorption is one of the great heresies of our generation. To interpret it as blind action without consideration of meaning or ends, as an escape from reason and consciousness; that is indeed to become the Truly Weak Man, to enlist in the great Fascist retreat which will land us finally in the ditch of despair, to cry like Elijah: 'Lord take away my life for I am not better than my fathers'.

From Lawrence's own account of himself, no one has found this temptation harder, nor conquered it more resolutely, better demonstrated the truth that action and reason are inseparable; it is only in action that reason can realize itself, and only through reason that action can become free. Consciousness necessitates more action not less, and *vice versa*.

To the problem of human relations he has an equally important contribution to make. Different as they appear on the surface, both he and his namesake, D. H. Lawrence, imply the same, that the Western-romantic conception of personal love is a neurotic symptom only inflaming our loneliness, a bad answer to our real wish to be united to and rooted in life. They both say 'noli me tangere'. It is at least doubtful whether in our convalescence sexual relations can do anything but postpone our cure. It is quite possible that the way back to real intimacy is through a kind of asceticism. The self must first learn to be indifferent; as Lenin said, 'to go hungry, work illegally and be anonymous'. Lawrence's enlistment in the Air Force and Rimbaud's adoption of a trading career are essentially similar. 'One must be absolutely modern.'

I mentioned Lenin. He and Lawrence seem to me the

two whose lives exemplify most completely what is best and significant in our time, our nearest approach to a synthesis of feeling and reason, act and thought, the most potent agents of freedom and to us, egotistical underlings, the most relevant accusation and hope.

[1934]

GOWER STREET—BEDFORD SQUARE—GERRARD STRET

By

NAOMI MITCHISON

The day my first book was taken,
I ran all the way from here to Birrell and Garnett's,
Dodging the crossings, in and out of the traffic,
Mad drunk!
So now the pavements are still a little golden,
The streets still faintly full of stars and roses and flags,

And Mr. Garnett terrifying and charming,
And Mr. Cape ever so polite —
Only he must have seen
How I was just dancing out of myself with sheer pleasure!

[1926]

THE VILLAGE BOOK

By

SIR WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS

One may safely prophesy of some writers, whatever the absolute success of any single book, that they will do better work at a later venture. We look for their next book, not only for its own sake, but because it will indicate the development of the author. Mr. Williamson is in this category; and therefore his new book is awaited with particular interest. One of the best known of the critics has said that he is a born novelist. In another form of literature his stories of the otter and of the deer are among the best: vivid, not to say exciting, and if anything too tightly packed with observation.

In spite of this sum of accomplishment, Mr. Williamson had not yet quite found himself, at any rate in manner. He had not, so it seemed to me, discovered his own technique; or conclusively proved in what direction his talent, I do not know why I should not say his genius, would lead him. He has now broken new ground, bounded on one side by the novel, on the other side by natural history. He has written a book of village annals that has no near parallel, so far as I know, in this region of literature. He has thrown off the affectations or mannerisms of style that qualified the excellence of *Tarka the Otter*, and has dropped the redundancies of his more ambitious novel. His record of incidents and characters in the life of a Devon village or two is very simple and moving; and it goes deep. He has a way, which is entirely

his own, of ending up the account of some quite unremarkable person or experience with a turn of thought, with a phrase or two that lends the whole a poignancy beyond all expectation. Richard Jefferies grew more and more mystical with each book till he lost himself in sheer mysticism in *The Story of My Heart*. More wisely perhaps Mr. Williamson is using the mystic and humanitarian in himself to interpret concrete events about him. No humanitarian has written with so complete an absence of sentimentality. The account of the badger-digging is a masterpiece. You feel what is wrong with the spirit of the men and the practice chiefly because the detail is so true that no comments are needed. You feel the hater of cruelty through a narrative strictly, almost baldly accurate.

Honesty is a great quality in literature, and rarer than may be supposed. Because of its honesty — and something more — I like the postscript of two chapters, very humorous and very sane, about the two village inns, the Higher House and the Lower House. It is an *amende honorable* to one of the badger-diggers, whose humanity further and deeper acquaintance had revealed. 'Charlie gave up the drinking of spirits; and when I saw him last he was mellow and humorous; he loved the village life; a shot at a rabbit or partridge, a clay-pigeon shoot, a quiet glass of beer, a game of skittles, pride in his grandson, and a sleep in trousers and shirtsleeves every afternoon.'

A succession of chapters in the second half of the book, under the general heading of 'the first day of spring' compose a village epic in a series of lyrics and elegiacs; there is humour, wit, comedy, mysticism, emotion, homeliness, sympathy and even satire, with a wealth of observation, present but never protruded, in most departments of natural history. The book ends with a human tale worth a place in any anthology. Mr. Williamson has found himself. His Devon villages are in the

company of Gibbs's *Cotswold Village*, and their denizens more than the equals of Jefferies' gamekeeper. Superlatives are an easy and hateful idiom of the critic's grammar; and we all know the constant epithet for comparisons. Nevertheless I may as well say that to my taste this is the best book about village life that I have ever read.

[1930]

LOGIC

By

W. H. Davies

My years to come are numbered on two hands,
  Ten fingers do the trick, and that is all;
Yet when this Cuckoo's dead, and comes no more,
  Shall I not live to hear his grandchild call?

So when I give a year-old dog my heart,
  With three-score years and more, and he so young —
Judged by our life we live on equal terms,
  Because his life is short, while mine is long.

To end this logic with that bird again,
  Be it enough to say I hope one thing —
That I'll be here when this contemporary's dead,
  Ten Aprils hence, to hear his grandchild sing.

[1933]

ERIC LINKLATER

By
MORAY McLAREN

I imagine that Mr. Eric Linklater must be getting tired of seeing the word 'gusto' in reviews of his works. He is himself partly to blame, for this quality is so obvious in everything he does that it is difficult for any reviewer to avoid mentioning it. It is, however, not Mr. Linklater's fault that he happens to be living and writing at a time when gusto is very much not in the literary fashion, or to put it probably more accurately, at a time when the average writer is incapable of feeling, far less expressing, that abounding and generous taste for life which was so common in an earlier if somewhat more complacent age. He cannot be blamed therefore if he stands out so prominently in this particular respect.

Those of us who are Scottish like to claim this quality in Mr. Linklater as a national trait, and though the very understandable self-consciousness of literature in Scotland in recent years has led people to claim nearly every literary trait as a Scottish one, I think we are not stressing the point too much when we look to Mr. Linklater's nationality as the source of much that is vital in his work.

Scots people, in general, run to extremes in temperament; they are either great stay-at-homes or great travellers, and if they travel they are continually animated and driven on by a relentless curiosity which is just another name for the taste for life. Mr. Linklater is of this type of Scotsman. He has

travelled furiously and far, and though that rather severe appearance of his, that reserved manner (which he puts on in the day-time), and that economy of words in conversation, may have given some of those whom he has met upon his travels the idea that he was not paying very much attention to them, they must have been rapidly disillusioned when they read his works. Little (as the Americans say) glances off that monumental dome; nearly everything is absorbed. He has given us in *Juan in America* some extravagantly generous descriptions of extravagant scenes, but Mr. Linklater can also make a back street in Aberdeen, a conversation in a High Street pub in Edinburgh, and many other less obvious scenes just as interesting — just because he himself is interested in them. If I hear that Mr. Linklater is to place the scene of his next novel in one street in the suburbs of Wigan, I shall not be in the least alarmed for the popularity or the success of that novel. He will be able to make that drab back-cloth to his drama as highly coloured as the scenes which he has described in the southern states of America.

Mr. Linklater started novel-writing with *White Maa's Saga*. It came at a time (1929, I think) when the public had had a surfeit of books about University life seen through the eyes of one particular student. Mr. Linklater chose this same theme, but with a difference. At the back of all the other stories there had hung the mists of Oxford, in which mild climate the heroes of those books practised endless aesthetic introspection. Mr. Linklater placed his university five or six hundred miles to the north of Oxford and upon the east coast of Scotland. He introduced thereby abundantly clean and healthy winds into the well-worn scene.

His next novel, *Poet's Pub*, moved southwards, and was a fantastic tale which, I can never understand why, seemed to escape the attention of film directors.

Then came *Juan in America*, and with it success. It was

pure champagne, a champagne with body in it. It was an astonishing mixture of fantasy, romance, description and satire — of *Alice in Wonderland*, Byron, Moll Flanders and Gulliver. It had that quality so often sought after and so seldom achieved, the quality of making the most improbable and fantastic adventures seem as probable to the reader as dreams seem to one when one is asleep. This wildly picturesque novel, which had the whole of America as its scene and the whole range of American life from Chicago gangsters to the sterilities of American highbrowism, was an immense success in Europe, where it was translated into many languages. It was perilously near a flop in America. That, after all, is understandable. It is human as well as American to laugh at one's neighbours, and any highbrow American reader of *The American Mercury* will be only too pleased to laugh at American lowbrows, and vice versa; but when the whole huge chameleon-coloured scene of America is held up to ridicule — well that is a bit too much.

Then Mr. Linklater did a bold thing — he wrote *Men of Ness*, which many critics believe to be his best book. Instead of attempting to pile success upon the top of his previous success with another *Juan*, he enjoyed himself by writing a *pastiche* (if one can use so French a word in so robust an experiment) on Icelandic life in the tenth century. He wrote deliberately in a style completely un-Latin, and instead of falling into the dull effect of 'a cat sat on the mat' type of Saxon English, somehow achieved a fine economical dignity with a huge procession of monosyllables. It was more than a *pastiche*; it was a real attempt to revive in at least one book an old and half-forgotten way of speech and thought.

Since then there has come *Magnus Merriman* and *Ripeness is All*, besides a number of smaller biographies, pamphlets and stories. Already Mr. Linklater's works take up quite a respectable space upon my book-shelf. It is pleasant to think

that there will soon have to be a lot more room made for his future works. It is pleasant to think that Mr. Linklater is still in his early thirties; that he is building himself a house in Orkney; that he is going to travel in China; that he is going to bring back Juan once again; in fact, that he is going to go on living and writing about living with all the gusto of which he is capable.

THE ART OF THINKING

By
ARTHUR RANSOME

I was much prejudiced against this book by certain imaginary readers. M. Dimnet when he writes, is, like most lecturers, vividly conscious of some two or three persons in the audience. Sometimes, indeed, he even lets them answer back, and we learn a good deal about them. There is a hint of banking or high commerce as the occupation of the male. The fingers of the female are not roughened by housework. They ride and as early as five in the afternoon are able to enjoy their gardens. They belong to the class from which Mr. Galsworthy has chosen the most notable specimens for his taxidermic art, a class with considerable leisure, education of the kind called 'good', and some security against the nightmare of want. M. Dimnet shows a little too clearly that these are the readers he has in mind, and reassures them against the suspicion that they may find thought unsettling by showing them that for him, too, the idea of Mussolini calls up at once the idea of personality and the idea of Bolshevik that of gaols. It is possible that resentment of these favoured pupils in the front row may deter others from crowding to their own great profit the back benches of the Abbé Dimnet's lecture-room. This would be a pity. Long before I had finished his book I had turned my prejudices out of doors and was listening as attentively as the rest.

'L'exercise de la pensée est un jeu, mais il faut que ce jeu

soit libre et harmonieux.' It is the best of all games to watch and M. Dimnet plays it with a seemingly effortless freedom and grace. No one will read his book without many times closing it, keeping a finger in the place, while his own mind, infected by the activity of the Abbé's, goes off on some private excursion. It does not give rules for thinking but it does give many rules for avoiding thoughtlessness and, by delightful example, makes its readers think. Too wise to try to teach what cannot be taught, the lecturer is himself thinking all the time. It is a pleasure and a stimulus to agree or to disagree with him and he is one of those writers who compel his readers to do one or other. For example, he complains that our world is populated by a majority of minors and that our education is insufficiently serious and too long postponed. Is it? Is it desirable that a man of twenty should 'know the essentials of even the encyclopaedic knowledge of to-day?' Can he learn so young and so fast without sacrificing things more important than knowledge? But how admirable is Mr. Dimnet's indignation at the indifference of parents to the quality of the stuff their children cram into their omnivorous mental stomachs. No parent who can help it gives his child second-best food. And 'no book ought to be left in the nursery that is inferior to *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Arabian Nights*, or Perrault's *Fairy Tales*'. As for grown-ups, 'Never read a book for the style', 'Only read what gives the greatest pleasure', and, finally, 'Do not read good books — life is too short for that — only read the best'. His mind plays over one aspect of thought after another, the processes of thinking, the tidying up of minds, the right way of reading newspapers, solitude, the persistent ghosts that gibber in the thinker's face, the elusive moths of thought that must be either caught or lost for ever.

If we were to apply M. Dimnet's principles too rigidly, we should not read his book, but it provides us with an excel-

lent excuse for disagreeing with him. He would not claim that its loose, summer texture was such as to place it among the best, for he would remember Schopenhauer's close woven essay on the same subject. But, not to read it would be to lose a delightful and enlivening experience. I have read it twice and returned to it again. I am not sure that it has not a claim to be placed among the best after all. It is, at least, the best book I know to be put into the hands of anyone who wishes to learn how to get the most out of his reading. For that reason alone it is a book of which a wise philanthropist might buy cartloads to give away at Christmas, confident that one here and one there may raise the standard of pleasure for a young man or a young girl in such a way as to affect the whole of the rest of their lives.

[1929]

THE GREAT MEADOW

By
EDWARD GARNETT

In Elizabeth Madox Roberts America possesses a novelist of the first interest. Both by her genius and her style Miss Roberts seems to me a rare flower in the new generation of American writers, which since the Great War may reckon a score or more of fine talents. Miss Roberts' work is of particular importance to American literature since in atmosphere and in inspiration it seems to be indigenous, true seed of its own soil. Hers is a genius mature, yet fresh as a milky ear of corn, near to nature and the teeming earth life, democratic in its sympathies but aristocratic in its tone and individuality. The pages of *The Time of Man* and *My Heart and My Flesh* are rich in human passion and their heroines, Ellen Chesser, the child of 'poor whites', and Theodosia Bell, the daughter of a family of southern gentlefolk now fast decaying, learn all that women know in love, in jealousy, in pride, and in acceptance. But, strong and original as is *My Heart and My Flesh,* there is something evasive in the book's effect as a whole, and the novel, I think, comes second to *The Time of Man.* In the latter, a chronicle of Ellen Chesser's life as girl, wife and mother, the human drama is shown us against the eternal background of Nature and her incredible fecundity, of the changing seasons in the fields and forests and rocky hills, in the urge of the earth life with its ceaseless growth and decay around us. Nothing could be closer to life than the

story, for it teems with all the sights and sounds of farm and cabin, of field and pasture, of valley and hill; all the intimate aspects of a woman's simple home life fill the pages, yet everything is fashioned to beauty.

In her latest novel *The Great Meadow*, a story of a group of Virginian pioneers who, in 1777, followed Boone's trail through the wilderness to the land of Caintuck, Miss Roberts has painted her national picture on an historical canvas. She has done it quietly, with only faint echoes of the drums of Independence beating afar from New York and the Hudson River, but with poetic depth and universality of feeling. The narrative flows like a strong, clear river first through the Virginian land of the heroine Diony's peaceful girlhood, carrying us along to her wedding with Berk Jarvis, and then to their journey with a band of pioneers through the forests and rivers and mountains for five hundred miles, to their new home at Harrod's Fort. The contrast between the life of the settled cities in the East and the wilderness forts in the West is struck early in the passage (p. 61) of Diony's and Betty's imagined visit to Baltimore in fashionable clothes, and in the passage (pp. 48-56) where the old hunter describes the wonders of the Ken-tak-ee meadow lands, the teeming game, the salt-licks, the tree-grown hills and the seven fair rivers. One sees that the author's literary method is to weave a diversified, beautiful pattern out of the network of daily reality. Artistically speaking it is a cumulative method and each fresh homely or brightly coloured thread has its place in the harmonious pattern. An author of a lesser instinct would have made much of thrilling situations and realistic details, of breathless dramas, of Indian ambuscades and the like. But Miss Roberts, in her fine economy, uses only a false owl's cry (p. 166) on the great journey to body forth the Indian peril. All her details are exact but in place, and her picture lives by its stern sobriety and ordered beauty.

When we come to the tragic struggle of Elvira with the Indian braves (pp. 196-9) the scene is singularly low-toned, yet Diony's trance and oblivion remain graven in the memory when a scene of sensational terror fades away like last year's leaves. The creative vision here pierces to the spirit, transcending the body. But all things in the author's artistic scheme work out by the logic of fact. Elvira's death brings into prominence the underlying opposition between the man's instincts and the woman's expectations. To Diony is born a strong boy-child and the dialogue (pp. 214-15) between her and Berk foreshadows the day when Berk, to take his revenge, journeys with his companions to the Shawnee country to burn the town of Blackfox, the redman. The climax of the dispute between them (p. 241), 'did I marry a man to carry revenge for ever?' is followed by the wilderness swallowing up Berk, with Diony's vain waiting for his return and her second marriage to Muir, the man who has stood by and supported her and her child. But Berk returns from the dead to his house at Deer Creek, and now to which of the two men, to each of whom she has borne a child, will she cleave? Nothing could show better the penetration of the author's vision than the masterly pages where Berk recounts his odyssey, his capture, his torments and long sufferings in Indian villages, his endurance, his will to escape, his far journey north to the Lake of the Hurons, his stay with the Ojibways, his ordeal in the great cold and in the council-hut of the dark men. When Diony involuntarily stands up and her choice between her two husbands is known, she too has pierced to the quick of things, and, turning the last pages, we know now what was to be. Out of the strong has come forth sweetness. The story of Diony and Berk has the beauty and force of an epic poem.

[1930]

PERCY LUBBOCK

By
A. C. BENSON

Mr. Percy Lubbock is a writer who has attainted a certain solid distinction among contemporary critics by a process diametrically opposed to all current and easy-going theories of criticism. Have we ever had in England a critic whose methods may be almost described as pathological? I very much doubt it. As a rule the English critic is little more than a writer of sympathy and intelligence, who does not so much aim at establishing principles as at awakening interest, and is at his best when he is gleefully discoursing of his own preferences. Mr. Lubbock's preferences are obvious enough, but he is less interested in the creative aspect of books, or the complexities and contradictions of human character, than in the method employed by the writer, the angle at which he approaches his problem, the economy of effect which he practises, and the subordination of all outlying and attractive bypaths to the steady advance of the main trunk-road.

When I speak of Mr. Lubbock's work as pathological, I mean that the skeleton of the book is his first concern, and that any deficiency there of flexible joint or sustaining bone is not to be atoned for by any captivating gesture or wistfulness of glance or delicate grace of rippled tresses! Many of Mr. Lubbock's literary appraisements have been made anonymously in *The Times Literary Supplement*. Then there have been *Quarterly* articles, both subtle and profound, on

Robert Browning, Keats, and Henry James. He has written an admirable monograph of a simple kind, with much restrained humour, on Samuel Pepys. His little biography of George Calderon was a vivid and masterly sketch of a man at once adventurous and self-effacing, who combined the aptitude of a savant with an unbounded and almost uncritical interest in the smallest details of the lives of his fellow-men.

And then there was the big edition of *Henry James's Letters*, marked by a severe accuracy and an unexampled editorial austerity; no blowing of trumpets or waving of banners; and so little of the showman that the reader seems almost conscious of a reluctance in the mind of the editor to allow as much of the inner mind of the hero to reveal itself as he is compelled to do!

There followed the book on *The Craft of Fiction*; but this, for all its quiet beauty of style and its apt and felicitous illustration, is really a severe scientific monograph, a piece of artistic geometry. Such literary pleasure as it gives is merely incidental. It does not touch on the creative mystery of subject, but, granted the subject, it is a fine analysis of the various routes, passages, staircases, doorways, by which various writers conduct the reader to the innermost chamber which holds the secret of the book.

Mr. Lubbock's latest book, the memories of his early days spent in the house of his grandfather at Earlham, is rather of the nature of a surprise; the whole atmosphere of the book is almost luxuriously romantic, but emotional rather than sentimental. The difference, I take it, between sentimental and emotional memories is this: that the sentimental outlook is all tinged with a subdued regret that the scene described has ceased to exist; while the emotional survey is rather concerned with preserving a record of something beautiful and moving. Mr. Lubbock does not present it pathetically; he is frankly glad that it existed and that he shared it.

It is a difficult thing to depict that particular atmosphere of comfort and solid position permeated by generous sympathy and genuine piety; yet it is all vigorously and clearly rendered. Then, too, the *dramatis personae* are touched in vividly and convincingly. The adorable figure, for instance, of his grandmother, so self-forgetful, so absorbed in a semi-mystical contemplation, and yet intensely practical, with an all-embracing warm-heartedness and yet a distinct consciousness of social dignity, is a very masterly piece of portraiture; because, out of these complex and almost contradictory elements, he presents a character entirely harmonious and transparently sincere.

No less skilful is the subtle rendering of the air and atmosphere of the old mansion, its stairways and corridors, its fragrant parlours and homely nurseries, with the summer air bringing in the scent of the roses from the sun-warmed garden and the songs of birds from the shady shrubberies — all overflowing from end to end with happy patriarchal life, and all the happier for the quiet and kindly discipline in the background, and the sense of family unity, instinctively felt rather than paraded or enforced. It makes one think of John Wesley's shrewd words — 'depend upon it, there is no such thing as solitary happiness'.

Perhaps the best quality of the book is that it gives the impression of sincere and accurate recollection expressed by a mature mind, but from the child's point of view, neither strained nor artistically heightened in the light of subsequent experience. If one compares it with a similar fragment of recollection, Pater's *Child in the House*, one feels that it gains by being a frank record of impressions, and not a subtly idealized and delicately emphasized reconstruction. That is what gives its best value to the book, its sense of genuineness and reality; and it is this, perhaps, which explains and accounts for what I spoke of as a surprise, that the writer of *The Craft*

of Fiction, with its impersonal and scientific decisiveness, and the editor of the *Henry James's Letters*, with its severe self-effacement, should have written a book so rich in varied portraiture, and with so glowing an appreciation of life. For all its relish and perception, the writer of the memories of Earlham contrives to be impersonal still. One learns what he saw and thought, not what he felt. It is a picture of life at a certain bright point, not a criticism of it. The secret of the happiness of Earlham is hardly hinted, never explained, and certainly never given away. But we shall hope for more books of the same kind from Mr. Lubbock; for a writer of undimmed perception and reliable memory, when without either sentimentality or egotism, can handle directly the very stuff of life, with a force and an emphasis that no laborious compiler of memoirs or imaginative romancer can either employ or imitate.

[1922]

THE ART OF LIFE

A Story by

A. E. COPPARD

Lupton was a gentleman: that is to say, he wore nice clothes, his impulses were generous, and he kept a manservant in his chambers — a man with a broken nose and a weak heart. He never liked anything that wasn't right, he disapproved of it. Moreover, if Lupton didn't like a thing it was wrong, and he disapproved of that. The world was full, so he declared, of people who understood *you*, oh so easily, but complained that you would never understand *them*. It was also full of those who couldn't understand anything and so went into business to conceal their blasted hopes. In fact Lupton talked like an oracle to the broken-nosed man, and behaved like an uncle.

Life (of which he was very fond of talking, being only thirty years old and rather lonely) had streamed around him and past him as it streamed around and past everybody else; glassily limpid at times, but seldom informed with any meaning he could cherish. And Lupton was fond of meanings; he liked order and intention, places like museums and exhibitions, things like statistics. So when Barry Godwin — so blithe and debonair and every delightful thing that Lupton was not — consented to share for awhile his luxurious chambers and the ministrations of his broken-nosed man, he was enchanted. Barry desired, though he was indigence itself, to contribute his part of the domestic expenses directly his entry upon some

profitable way of life permitted it. For the time being he had to 'confront life as the trees and animals do', his recent failure to take a degree having rendered the chances of any other process a little promiscuous.

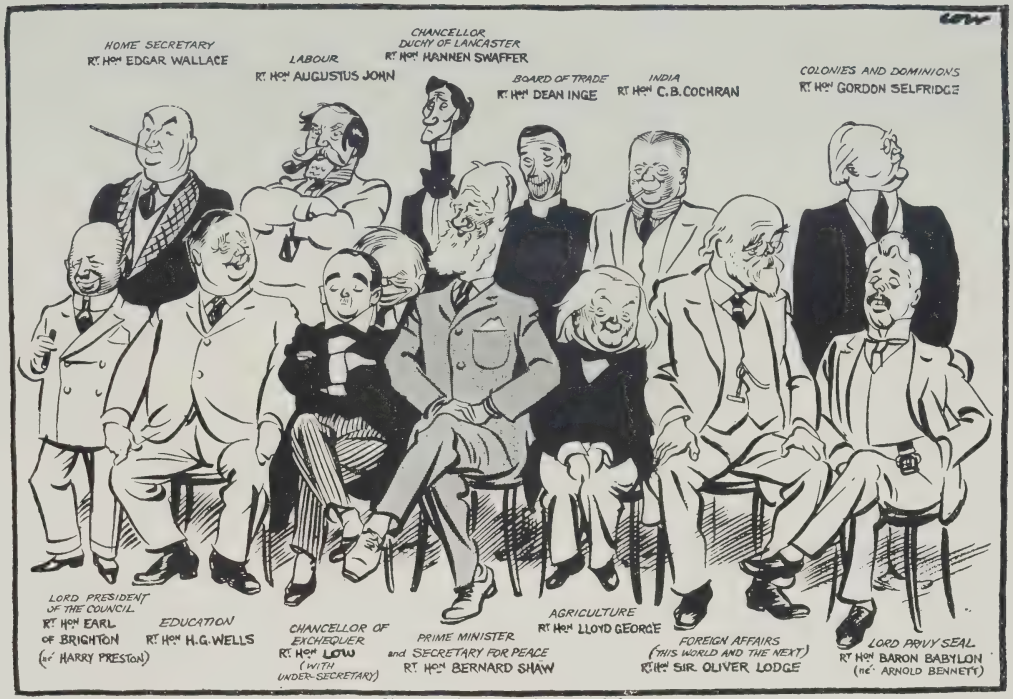
'All right, if you insist,' Lupton had agreed, 'but I shall still be your debtor, dear Barry. The whole art of life may be said to lie in extending one's opportunities and diminishing one's responsibilities.'

'Is that all?' queried Barry.

'Well, it's pretty good, isn't it? You know, unless you make the living of your life an art, it becomes a burden to you. Life always wants you to do ten thousand things you would rather not do: earn your own living for example, in some dreadful way; and, worst of all, now and then fall helplessly in love, which is bad; or hopelessly — which is safer.'

For nearly two months Lupton's life had been steeped in this bliss of friendship. Just at first Barry's presence was a little incommodious, but everything was quite nice and there was plenty space after the broken-nosed man had been persuaded to give up his room and sleep in the pantry. Affection or love had never before come to Lupton; they had come to others, but they had not come to him; and sometimes he had felt the pang of that void and been quite sad about it. And now there was this! They did all sorts of agreeable things together. But Barry never yielded himself to the situation as the gentle Lupton did. Not quite, and at length, alas! he became tantalizing and vague and sharp-tempered and moody. To Lupton's sorrow he seemed to draw back from their friendship. But he was a genius, with dangerous leanings towards poetry — some envious people said that he wooed Apollo with a triangle.

'I loathe realism,' Barry had once lamented, 'it is my bane. I am an idealist, concerned with the truth of beauty rather than the beauty of truth.'



THE IDEAL CABINET.

from a cartoon by David Low. Reproduced in *THE BEST OF LOW*

And Lupton had retorted: 'Some like Whitaker, others prefer Old Moore. But if you propose to yourself the luxury of ideals, I warn you that a time may come when you will be asked to redeem your engagements to them — probably by some quite unprincipled person. The art of life . . .' And so on, like that, and a lot more. Lupton soared on and on; it was the kind of theme he liked to discourse upon, and that was the way he discoursed.

'Oh, my God!' murmured Barry to himself, and forthwith took to drink, while Lupton took to philosophizing alone.

One evening he returned to his chambers unexpectedly. There was but a dim light in the room, and all he could see at first was a pot of paste and a lemon on the table. Why those two things impinged upon his observation he never understood, but there they were — a pot of paste and a lemon. Beyond them was Barry, flushed, and reclining beside a lady on the sofa. It was dizzying, it was a revelation: the sofa faintly chaunted of impropriety. Dim light, pot of paste, lemon, Barry, and that female. Without a word Lupton turned and went down the stairs again. Sharply he walked into the street and sharply he strode on and on with his sharp little legs, quite a long way, until he came to St. James's Park. Now, trees at evening always induced melancholy thoughts, chill like the air, or as unlustrous as the dim light. And tonight he could not stand it. Nothing is so vexing as to find your cultivated mind registering the emotions of a curate or the conclusions of a daft girl. So he marched his sharp little legs home once more.

At midnight Barry again appeared, this time accompanied by two young men as unsober as himself.

'Hullo, stuffy Lupton! S'down Jury. S'down Mr. — Mr. — Cattermole your name? Mr. Cattermole — bloody old Lupton!' Lupton stared in agitation at his friend. This was offensive, but he was not offended. He was hurt. It was

not merely indecent, it was all wrong. He got up and went silently to bed. While he was undressing drunken Barry burst suddenly into his room and 'pitched into' him, heaved him a blow in the face that stretched him across the bed, and left him so. Lupton recovered himself and locked the door. Shouts of laughter sounded from the other room, and songs so ribald that he huddled beneath the bedclothes. And though he was certain he would never go to sleep, he awoke in the morning at the usual time in the usual way. Water for shaving. The broken-nosed man said it was a fine day. Lupton peered into the mirror and saw a blue bump beneath his eye. Contemplating it with distaste he received into his soul a determination to 'put paid to the account' of Mr. B. Godwin. Difficult, of course, and painful for both undoubtedly, but he would have to do it. It should be done — it must.

'My head is bloody but unbowed,' he murmured, zealously stropping. Heavenly day! A very bright morn it was, with birds twittering; the steps of people echoed crisply in the gravelled quadrangle, and the traffic hummed joyously from the big street fifty yards away. He scraped his nails, took a clean handkerchief, and stepped along to the sitting-room. Invariably he breakfasted alone, for Barry was a sluggard, but on opening the door he saw the poet there before him, sitting at the table over an untasted dish, his head bowed on his hands. Lupton had curious compassions, and the sight of the drooping figure profoundly moved him.

'Hallo, hallo!' he said, blithely patting his friend's shoulder as he passed. Barry glared out at him with a dull, sick gaze.

'It's all right, old man,' Lupton quavered. 'I deserved it, Barry; very caddish of me to behave as I did: must forgive me.'

'You *were* rather a chump,' said his friend again with a sigh, again resting his head.

'Quite, quite, Barry. Forget it.' And, shaking out his napkin, he began, 'The art of life is to . . .'

'Oh, for God Almighty's sake! I beg of you!' moaned the protesting Barry.

[1923]

THE COTTAGE AT CHIGASAKI

By

EDMUND BLUNDEN

That well you draw from is the coldest drink
In all the country Fuji looks upon;
And me, I never come to it but I think
The poet lived here once who one hot noon
Came dry and eager, and with wonder saw
The morning-glory[1] about the bucket twined,
And with a holy heart went out to draw
His gallon where he might; the poem's signed
By him and Nature. We need not retire,
But freely dip, and wash away the salt
And sand we've carried from the sea's blue fire,
And share a melon; and without great fault,
Though comfort is not poetry's best friend,
We'll write a poem too, and sleep at the end.

[1933]

[1] Perhaps the most familiar Japanese poem is that which says, approximately, 'The morning-glory has taken hold of the well; I'll borrow some water elsewhere.'

A NEST OF SIMPLE FOLK

By
KATE O'BRIEN

Seán O'Faoláin has named his book challengingly. Such a salute to a master has a big assumption in its homage, but the assumption of the really gifted man is not superficial, and this one justifies itself. Indeed, in some senses it does this so deeply that one feels that the naming of the book, *A Nest of Simple Folk,* may well have been an act of the unconscious, a dream-trick. For Turgenev, most sober of poets, most poetic of realists, drew his people out of their own landscape, which was for him their *raison d'être* and explanation. Their individualism, their spiritual idiom depends entirely on Russian skies and fields and streets, and they live for us in the measure of their creator's power to present them rising out of and merging into their own landscape.

So do the people of Seán O'Faoláin. To get them at all, to move at ease through their troubled, bitter histories, we must get their place before them, its uniqueness, its changeful timelessness. And that he has given with a power and sobriety, a disciplined passion of remembrance that repeats itself without effort and without monotony from page to page and from phase to phase of this long, bitter story of a long and bitter life.

'It was that sighing land, wet above and wet under-foot, and that season between the last threshing and the first

ploughing that became his land and his season, a world of brown hayricks wind-tumbled, birds fallen silent, low, lumbering clouds reefed with a chill that took the edges of the water in the lakes and the tattered spears about their strands.'

Out of that land, so piercingly unmistakable in all his evocations to those who have once known it, the author has drawn with masterly strength the humours, violent, sweet, savage and holy, of its authentic people. There is nowhere a false note of characterization, nowhere a cheapness.

'"The priest is called."

'So they moved over the dim fields, like night-cattle gathering to a drinking pool. All the small ends that made life real to them were diminished and denied by the endlessness of the grave.'

The book is long and wide, taking its central character, a bitter, violent, self-centred but never ignoble man of Munster, of the Golden Vale, from his boyhood in '54 to the streets of Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916. Through every kind of strong, male folly and misfortune to a right and characteristic end, dragging his people with him, women and men, with their manifold, characteristic stories. If the book fails it is that its scope was too much, making many of its assumptions too casual, and sacrificing the reader's sense of pattern to a too hurried piling-up of years. But it cannot be said to fail. It presents a countryside as superbly as that has ever been done, and if in its sum it does not lift the heart as Turgenev did by his terrible insistence on the nobility of man, it has all the pity, all the restraint, all the acceptance of great work.

[1933]

Kate O'Brien.

Fr Thomas Tuohy.

THE PORTRAIT OF A MIND

By
J. MIDDLETON MURRY

Mr. J. W. N. Sullivan has written a book that is at all times interesting, and often beautiful: yet it is a book about which I feel reluctant to make any further opinion public. For *But for the Grace of God* is a peculiar book; its admirable title is to be taken literally. Its form is that of autobiography, yet it is not strictly – indeed not at all strictly – autobiographical; the events of Mr. Sullivan's life have been deliberately and successfully rearranged. And yet again, in some more essential sense it is autobiographical. Here, one feels, is the authentic 'note' of a life-experience.

And that is strange, or strange to me. For the possibility of such an achievement has certain implications. So particular an impression of sincerity cannot, I think, be produced save by sincerity. Yet how could it be possible to rearrange one's life experiences deliberately, and still be convinced that one had rendered 'the pattern' of that life? To me, as I say, this is strange. Yet I believe Mr. Sullivan is convinced; and what is more, I am convinced myself.

The pretty riddle, which makes the book finally intriguing, as well as at all times interesting and often beautiful, I must try to answer, because the attempt appears to offer the directest approach to the queer and abiding quality of *But for the Grace of God*. Implied in its actual composition is an unusual hiatus between the subject experiencing and the objects of his experience. One has to posit some continual process of transliteration from the objective to the subjective mode. But

with Mr. Sullivan we have to deal with a process that goes beyond transliteration; it must be called rather an intermittent 'transposition' of the objective into the subjective. Only when this transposition has taken place does the objective become reality for him.

This seems to point straight to a deep connection – hardly to be made explicit – between this psychological idiosyncrasy and Mr. Sullivan's two momentous interests: mathematics and music – the science and the art respectively wherein some kindred process of transposition is most complete. Mr. Sullivan is one of the most eminent *amateurs* among us both of mathematics and music. He is creative in neither. Perhaps here we touch on the cause of the peculiar quality, and peculiar pathos – the word is used arbitrarily somewhat in the sense of that 'pathos' which some of us invariably experience at the close of good music – of *But for the Grace of God*. Here the analogue and the object touch so nearly that we must avoid confusion. The 'pathos' of *But for the Grace of God* is not itself the pathos after music; it is – to speak with complicated exactness – the pathos after an experience which *should* have been musical (or mathematical).

All this may be moonshine in so far as it pretends to give an *explanation* of a very unusual book; it offers itself merely as description, seeking for the sake of mere precision the guise of explanation. Yet it may contain some element of genetic truth as well. For even as explanation it is partly corroborated by the note of resignation at the close:

> 'Having arrived at this point, which I feel is the end of life in the sense that is the end of growth, I am curious to see whether I can trace any sort of coherent pattern in the process. For I cannot believe that any future that I can anticipate will appreciably modify the significance of what is past. Seeming waste, meaningless suffering, unfulfilled

hopes, will none of them derive any meaning from the future that they do not already possess.'

That is expressed with a candour and lucidity characteristic of the author. I think it beautiful writing. But, I confess, it leaves me sad. My reaction is probably quite personal. For such a conclusion would be for me a command to suicide. But then I could never allow the cogency of the dilemma implied in Mr. Sullivan's first page: between the grim realization 'that all life has narrowed to one mortal career' and the indulgence of the romantic imagination 'that life offers boundless possibilities'. I am one of those for whom the acceptance of necessity is the beginning of freedom – I am, in short, a 'materialist'. And I find it significant that Mr. Sullivan has no understanding of 'materialism'. He has a positively comical page about it (p. 73) which culminates in these sentences, naive in form and content:

> 'Many good minds have belonged to this school. Most medievalists seem to have thought in this way, and in modern times, Goethe is a celebrated example. Personally, I find nothing more bewildering than conversation with minds of this type. It is very prevalent, I find, amongst minor poets and minor musicians.'

How a minor poet could have the same type of mind as Goethe passes my comprehension. How a type of mind which 'is quite incapable of distinguishing between things that are different' could have 'many good minds' belonging to it is inexplicable to me. That may be because I happen to have a mind of this type. And if I have failed to distinguish the quality of Mr. Sullivan's admirable book with the necessary clarity, he must put it down to this. But I feel that if he had suffered the sinister Mr. Symons with more patience he might have discovered that mysticism and materialism are nearer neighbours than he dreams.

Because *But for the Grace of God* is primarily the portrait of a mind, I have dealt exclusively with this aspect; but I should add that the picture of Sybil — a character whose essence was of a kind that is not lost by 'transposition' — is lovely and enduring in the memory.

[1932]

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RONALD FRASER

By
HUMBERT WOLFE

Mr. H. G. Wells has perhaps the most distinguished imagination of our age, but it is an imagination entirely concrete. Even in his wildest flights he advances into space with the steady angular beat of an aeroplane, and never with the loose and lovely movement of a bird. It is not true to say that his genius is mechanical, but it is true that knowledge for him is the quest of human happiness rather than of truth. In other words he is in the ultimate reckoning a reformer of society rather than a philosopher.

Exactly the opposite is true of Mr. Ronald Fraser. His imagination is as nearly disembodied as it is possible for imagination to be without losing meaning. For him knowledge is a series of symbols of which the content is unlimited. It matters to him very little therefore what actual symbol he may choose for the object of his contemplation. In fact the life of plants and the strange cold world of the fish at the beginning of his career at least held for him the most significance in the sense that they most easily set the mind free for flight.

Mr. Fraser realized that no limit has yet been discovered to the use to which the novel-form can be put. He had two interests from the outset which he wished to explore in that form. He had first a very lively and delicate appreciation of the inner value of human relations, and in the second place

he wished to see them not *sub specie æternitatis* but against the shadowy background of things immortal. For him the exciting and decisive moment in a love-affair, is not when the lovers kiss or part, but when the kiss or the parting ripples out into space finding its counterpart and its interpretation there. For Mr. Fraser the borderlands of the actual (or human) and the real — the inhuman — are always encroaching one upon another. There is no spiritual moment, however majestic, which may not find itself translated into the dullest of daily apprehension, no incident of life, however insignificant, that may not suddenly melt into its archetypal connotation. His novels therefore are like *Hamlet* in having a play within a play, but the lesser play with Mr. Fraser is that constituted by normal encounters and experience; the larger is the unexpressed, and not wholly expressible, impact of these experiences in another dimension.

As I have said, there is for Mr. Fraser no incident of life, however insignificant, that may not suddenly assume ethereal magnitude. It was not odd, therefore, though perhaps unnecessarily provocative, that in his first book *The Flying Draper*, he should have chosen a draper in Hampstead as the crossing-point to the Bodhisat. It did not seem strange to him that he should ask us to rise with a largish ill-dressed type occupied with the detailed vending of Manchester goods and engaged to a giggling nymph known as 'Florrie' actually into the air. For Mr. Fraser there was no violent transition. On the contrary it was the petty actualities that made the transition possible. As there is no place on earth from which a man may not escape into death, so there is no point in character or in action from which he may not escape into life. And the more precise the nature of the character or the action the easier the escape.

Mr. Fraser had indicated in this, his first book, the outline of the territory that he was to penetrate and ultimately to

occupy. Step by step he has convincingly manifested the power of the imagination, not only to create a world beyond the borderline, but to make it populous. He has understood, and made us share, strange spiritual adventure, but he has never lost his way, nor permitted us to lose ours. He has extended the province of the novel in the true creative way, by imposing his own reality upon what, before he touched it, was shadow. *Rose Anstey*, *Flower Phantoms*, *The Vista* and *Marriage in Heaven* have exactly that quality of strangeness made familiar which provoked the attention of the world in *The Flying Draper*.

[1933]

A GREAT POET

By
MONK GIBBON

Mr. W. H. Davies is going to outlast a good many contemporary reputations. I can remember my own delight when I first discovered him in the shape of a few immortal lyrics quoted in a book of lectures on contemporary poetry.

'There was a battle in her face,
Between a lily and a rose;
My love would have the lily win,
And I the lily lose.'

I have read many subtle and brilliant poems written by different hands since that was written, but none of them I am glad to say have put me in the mood to think any the less of it.

For it is a fact that to-day two rival schools of poetry are busy trying to blast one another's reputations. One can enlist under the banner of either faction, but whichever one chooses one is expected to profess a whole-hearted contempt and abhorrence for the other. I have a considerable admiration both for F. R. Leavis and for F. L. Lucas as critics, the former for having swept away a good many cobwebs from contemporary judgment, the latter for keeping a sane and steady eye on the eternal values. So on the present occasion my impulse is to suggest to a generation tempted to abandon anything so *démodé* as love for the superior inspirational qualities of railway trains, electric pylons and psycho-analysis,

that there is nothing inconsistent in approving T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and at the same time approving a poet like Davies.

The real enthusiast is catholic in his tastes. Even if the latter run to the strange and exotic it will not make him despise anything so accepted as a rose. Or if he is a rose lover there are moments when he will permit himself — metaphorically of course — to embrace a particularly original form of cactus, without feeling that he has lapsed from critical integrity. Only little minds are obliged to be prim, and only academic minds feel constrained to debate the rival merits of a Herrick and a Donne when the two kinds of poetry under discussion are so entirely different.

Of the three living poets, whose names have been mentioned, it is probably Davies who has given me the purest and most genuine pleasure. This may be that I was younger when I met him than in the case of the other two; or perhaps it is a matter of native disposition. Nor does it invalidate Davies in my eyes to be told how much he owes to the Elizabethan or to the Jacobean lyrists. Every poet has influences. The poetry that really influences us is the poetry that wakes a response from something existent in ourselves. It fertilizes a germ already there. The dogma of originality has been overstressed. There is only one originality — sincerity. Without that a poet can use the most novel and revolutionary forms and yet remain an echo, something at second hand. Whereas given sincerity and an even moderate distinction of mind, given soul authenticity one might put it, a man can employ the oldest forms and yet impress his own individuality on them to such a degree as to make them seem new.

Lucas, for I will quote Lucas on this occasion, has written about 'clever persons who have yet been so simple as to suppose that their creations could live and breathe without a heart', and he goes on to say, 'cleverness it seems to me has its place in poetry, but only a second place, as the tiring-maid of

passion or of beauty'. Davies has never aspired to be clever. 'And would they have me talking in my sleep?' He has made his Muse the tiring-maid (country born, unsophisticated) of passion and beauty, and has been content to leave it at that. An Alpine herd, or a village Romeo and Juliet, are not conscious of an essential human inferiority when they meet a spectacled professor out mountain-climbing. Nor need Davies be ashamed when he encounters his more intellectual rivals.

Davies is a great poet and he is also an original one. That is to say he has sounded a note in English poetry which did not exist before. The lovely, the almost tragic deliberation of certain of his lines, lines generally about the poor, are his specific contribution to lyric verse; this and his delicious tenderness, artless and at the same time artful, in his role of lover. It is hard to think of the perfect examples but these must serve:

> 'They made that dying man break stones
> In faith that Christ is still alive.'

The slow beat, the deliberate cadence, which emphasize the irony and indignation behind these words, are a device that he uses again and again.

Or take the tenderness of this:

> 'I thought my true love slept;
> Behind her chair I crept
> And pulled out a long pin:
> The golden flood came out,
> She shook it all about,
> With both our faces in.
>
> 'Ah, little wren I know
> Your mossy, small nest now
> A windy, cold place is;

No eye can see my face,
Howe'er it watch the place
Where I half drown in bliss.'

Lafcadio Hearn says somewhere that the greatness of simplicity is much harder to achieve than the greatness of complexity. It is one of those dogmas which without being watertight contain a truth. The greatness of Davies is the greatness of simplicity. He rivals Wordsworth in the directness, the baldness almost of some of his effects. He is a supreme lyrist. His naivety has been sneered at, and the use he makes of his verse to reveal himself. But therein really lies his strength. He has laid bare his heart to us; it was the heart of a poet; and the result is poetry.

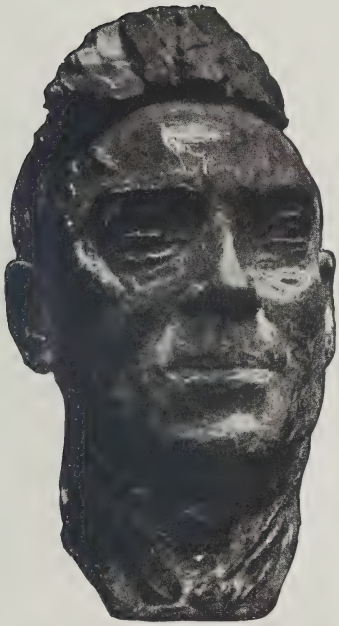
[1934]

THE WOODS AND BANKS

By
W. H. Davies

The woods and banks of England now,
Late coppered with dead leaves, and old,
Have made the early violets grow,
And bulge with knots of primrose gold.
Hear how the blackbird flutes away,
Whose music scorns to sleep at night:
Hear how the cuckoo shouts all day
For echoes — to the world's delight:
Hallo, you imp of wonder, you —
Where are you now, cuckoo? Cuckoo!

[1922]



W. H. DAVIES

from a bust by Jacob Epstein in the Art Gallery at Newport in Monmouthshire

A LETTER TO PETER FLEMING

By
DEREK VERSCHOYLE

Dear Peter,

I have just spent a week-end made delightful by two circumstances: I have succeeded for once in keeping a promise which I made to myself some time ago, and I have re-read your three books — to do so was the promise. Re-reading is perhaps not the word (if indeed it is a word at all), for a purist might hold that I had never previously read them at all. *Brazilian Adventure* I read, if purists may be disregarded, in circumstances of extreme difficulty the week it came out. I started it in the back of a comfortable but somewhat over-pneumatic car on the way down to Gloucestershire for the week-end, my attention being constantly diverted by undulations in the road, and I finished it on Sunday in church, where an error in tactics had landed me for the first time since leaving school, and where my enjoyment suffered by the necessity to sublimate my natural manifestations of pleasure. *One's Company* I read in proof with something less than the requisite detachment, in the frantic pursuit of a suitable extract to publish in *The Spectator*. And *Variety*, though of course I had read all of its contents with regular delight when they were first published, I had been able to do no more than taste in bulk when some opportunist filched my copy. Since then so many acres of newspaper have been planted with

discussions of your writing that it was almost with the comfortable reassurance with which one opens an unread classic that I settled down to your books.

I was surprised as a matter of fact to find that my impressions were not after all as inadequate as I had expected. *Brazilian Adventure* in particular I discovered that I remembered accurately. My enjoyment in it was certainly not diminished by this, in fact it was accentuated. I was able to take for granted, and even possibly to discount, certain things about which I had been slightly doubtful on first acquaintance: your self-consciousness, your self-depreciation, your determination to deromanticize the obviously romantic. These qualities comprise some of your strongest assets as a conversationalist, but my first reading of *Brazilian Adventure* had suggested that, by forcing you to assess your own experiences too closely against the background of your predecessors, they might restrict your talents as a writer. On a second reading this does not appear so: the tendency to depress seems less an immediate quality of your writing than a part of the adventure which you are describing, in which place it is entirely estimable. This represented my only doubt about your book when I first read it, and now that it is removed I have no doubts at all. It is clearly one of the best travel-books of the present century, and I think it will date only in the correct way. The first part of the book is entirely delightful, and the second is enthralling. Your skill in preserving the suspense of the final race back to Para is so complete that the remembered knowledge that you win served only to remove the strain of vicarious anxiety and allowed me to concentrate wholeheartedly on your admirable descriptions of events one by one. But why did you break off the narrative at the point you did? What happened after your arrival in Para? On what terms did you part with Major Pingle? And what communications, incidentally, have you

received from him since the publication of the book — for I assume that you sent him a signed and annotated copy?

One's Company I found, if certainly a delightful, a less attractive book to re-read than *Brazilian Adventure*. The subject is obviously less good. There have been several good books about China in the last few years, those about Brazil had always been strictly unreadable. Moreover what you were doing in Brazil was highly unusual, while in China your activities, and therefore to some extent your opportunities, were relatively ordinary. But above all in *One's Company*, as befits a special correspondent of *The Times*, you have for part of the time a didactic purpose to fulfil. In my opinion there is much to be said for the conventional belief that no knowledge is valuable that has not been laboriously and painfully acquired. It avoids confusion of purpose and chaos of issues. Knowledge is very well in its own place, but it is less important than pleasure, and I decline to believe that those abnormal creatures, less rational than collectors of ferns or postage stamps, who profess that they pursue knowledge for its own sake, are not victims of a misleading delusion. From *Brazilian Adventure* I acquired no knowledge of Brazil, and part of my delight in it lay in precisely the fact that I had read of a remote and to me unknown part of the world and had learnt of the details of its fauna, flora, climatic conditions, *et alia*, not one jot more than was necessary to the aesthetic and dramatic fabric of your narrative. From *One's Company* I similarly learned nothing about China, but that was my fault and not yours. I had to fortify myself against receiving information. I am perfectly ready to learn about banditry in Manchuria and the advisability of moving the legation from Peking to Nanking, but I wish to learn about them in the proper place: which is not, in my opinion, in a travel book by you, in which I am necessarily much more interested in the author's responses to experience than in

political and economic problems. The very facility with which you sugar the pill of serious information stiffens my resistance: I reflect how enchanting you would be if these solemn considerations were not interposed between you and your proper function.

When I turned to *Variety* I found myself involved in a dilemma concerning your future. These essays seemed to me delightful when they were first published, and they seem to me delightful now. It is absolutely essential that something like them should appear regularly in a weekly journal, but there is unfortunately only one person with the sustained wit to write them. It is also essential that another travel-book like *Brazilian Adventure* should be written, and for that again there is unfortunately only one potential writer. One of these necessities I suppose we shall have reluctantly to sacrifice. But you must see that we don't have to go without both.

Yours,
Derek Verschoyle.

RICHARD JEFFERIES

By
HENRY WILLIAMSON

One summer morning eight years ago I arrived at the village of Broadwater in Sussex and went into the churchyard to look among the tombstones and mounds for the grave of a man who seemed to me to be irregularly the greatest writer in English literature since Shakespeare. While I was going slowly among the hawkbits and long grasses around the grave-mounds for the second time, an old man came to me and said, 'Are you looking for the grave of Jefferies?' 'Yes,' I replied. 'I thought you must be, from your face,' he said, 'one can always tell a Jefferies lover'. 'Are there many?' I asked. 'Just a stray one now and then, like yourself,' he told me. 'But Jefferies isn't buried here: this is the old burial ground, the new cemetery is over there,' and he pointed to some trees across the road. There I went, and after search found the grave, and sat on the mown grassy edge, and wondered if Jefferies were near in the sunshine. Hawkbits were in flower there, too, blazing like small suns out of the grass. It was right that these were not cut by that place, for he had loved them as the sun itself.

While I was sitting by the white marble edging of the tomb — how Jefferies dreaded white marble and cemeteries! — put up by his admirers, another man came along and told me that the last person to sit on the turf by the grave was an old gentleman with a beard and the eyes of an eagle, who had

told him, one of the gardeners of the cemetery, that he would like to be buried near Jefferies when his time came. I had previously said the same thing to the gardener, and this had called forth the memory. 'In due course that old gentleman was buried here,' said the gardener. 'He lies over there. You may have heard of him, his name was Hudson, and he came to Broadwater because his friend was buried here.'

What sort of a man was Richard Jefferies, who, dead, befriends living solitaries about the world? He was the son of a Wiltshire yeoman farmer; he was a genius who had very few, if any, real friends, being nicknamed by his family and acquaintances Loony Dick, or Moony Dick. He was born on November 6th, 1848. A frail boy, yet with spiritual fire or vitality, he suffered as all lonely unformed 'characters' suffer in a workaday environment. He wandered much on the downs above Swindon and Marlborough, he was a romantic, he dreamed of a future different from the present. He became a reporter on a local paper; he wrote novels about London society, of which he knew little or nothing; and one day he wrote a long letter to *The Times* about the agricultural labourer in Wiltshire. A very long letter, several thousand words, a masterly letter, which immediately made his name known to a small and knowledgeable public. Thereafter various magazines, *Longman's*, *Fraser's*, the *New Quarterly*, the *Fortnightly*, and the *Graphic*, were ready to publish essays and informative articles about farming and the English countryside. He married, and went to live near London. By the age of thirty, three serials or series of essays had been printed anonymously in the *Pall Mall Gazette*: they were afterwards reprinted in book form, with the titles, *The Gamekeeper at Home*, *Wild Life in a Southern County*, and *The Amateur Poacher*.

Like all men of genius, Jefferies had extraordinary sight, and his style was his sight returning from his memory into

words. He saw things as the sun sees them: plain. And as the sun shines on them, giving them life, so the writer, or the genius or the insight of the writer, gives them life in words. It is a natural process: but in most people plain seeing is obscured early in life, and in time the sense of direct sight is occluded or obliterated, the natural originality lost, owing to educational or group ideas being impressed on them in childhood and youth. They become people of ordinary or conventional ideas, who towards middle age have lost the faculty of plain seeing, and have no sympathy or link with its manifestations in others. This is why most poets, or prophets as they were anciently styled, suffered in life and usually came to a tragic ending. Jefferies is among them. He died at the age of thirty-nine, worn out, in poverty, generally unappreciated, and after years of pain due to fistula and to intestinal tuberculosis, which his doctors did not recognize until the end of his life.

While during his life he had a few acquaintances or friends, it is perhaps not untrue to say that he never had a real friend or peer, and therefore he died half way through life, because he lived by the spirit and had no living spirit like himself for companion. There was in another part of England a rising and abused writer named Hardy; but these peers never chanced to meet. Richard Jefferies' friends were to be — as once he told Mr. Roger Ingpen, the distinguished editor of the Julian Edition of Shelley's poetical works — in posterity. Mr. Ingpen has given me a word picture of Jefferies, aloof and courteous, thin, tall, blue-eyed, bearded, coming into the office of Smith, Elder and Company, with whom the youthful Mr. Ingpen was learning publishing, to be told that his books were not selling at all. 'One day, I think they will be read,' faltered Jefferies, on his last visit there, to the unvocal but sensitive youth.

About the age of thirty, when he was writing the three

books which all who care for and know the English countryside come to possess and treasure at some time or other in their lives, Jefferies was in his best or peak period. He was hopeful; he had had some small success. Those at home could now realize that Moony Dick was not the waster they had scoffed at or derided, perhaps in a not unkindly way, but nevertheless in a way that was deadly to the sensitive and lonely author. The three country books are a treasure house of lovely things. Pedestrian perhaps, truly the fruits of hundreds of walks in the West country: books to be read slowly, to be dipped into, and favourite passages to be read again and again. Every reader will have his or her own places of return and haunting. Many do not care for the later Jefferies, the frustrated man of action, the dreamer, the poor invalid, rising phoenix-like in ancient sunlight. And of the 'naturalist' Jefferies, how often has one heard him dismissed by the term 'cataloguer', by writers who have no sight themselves, whose work has little, if any, original detail, power, or purpose! For the sad truth is that Jefferies has not yet come into his own. A future generation of English men and women, grown in direct sunlight and not partly in occlusion, will claim him as one of themselves, he who in life was always thinking of the sun and the sky and the stars and the air of the world which is our very life.

[1934]

THE MIND IN THE MAKING

By
H. G. WELLS

When I last visited America, I watched the Washington disarmament conference, met all sorts of interesting and important people, and saw a multitude of significant things. But when I come to reckon up, if ever I do reckon up, the values of this American visit, I think I may well reckon that, from my own personal, individual point of view, the encounter that has been of most importance and that is likely to have the greatest lasting effect upon me is meeting and talking to Professor James Harvey Robinson, and reading his fascinating book *The Mind in the Making*.

For me, I think James Harvey Robinson is going to be almost as important as was Huxley in my adolescence and William James in later years. He takes much that was latent and crude in my mind and gives it texture and form and confidence; and the spirit of the school he has organized liberates something of my private dreams into the world of reality. I find after reading *The Mind in the Making* just the same sort of imaginative release into collateral fields that I got long ago from Huxley and from James. I have long been curious and puzzled by the sculptures, writing, and such-like remains of the Neolithic mind found in America; and antiquarian material from Mexico, Peru, and Central America. There is not a word about this stuff in *The Mind in the Making*, and yet after reading it I find much that was

monstrous and obdurate in these old riddles dissolving at last into a quite acceptable and comprehensive explanation. The book has had the effect of illuminating me not only at its point of application, but all along the line of my curiosities.

These autobiographical confidences would be inexcusable if they concerned me alone, but I feel that what has happened to me — the sense of having created a bridge and come into a new land of understanding — must be happening to quite a number of other readers of this great teacher. It is possible that we were all ripe for this book, that most of the clambering to the ridge has been done in our studies of psycho-analysis and of educational and other politico-social problems during the last quarter century. But if that deprives Mr. Robinson of isolation, it robs him not at all of his pre-eminent leadership.

I do not know who it was who first said that the human mind, being a product of the struggle for existence, was essentially a food-seeking system and no more necessarily a truth-finding apparatus than the snout of a pig. I believe it must have been Lord Balfour, twenty-five or thirty years ago. It is upon the lines of this suggestion, it is upon a profound scepticism of the truth-testing instrument, that the new school of thought is going. Our minds, the most fundamental of our presuppositions, are as much a response to immediate necessities and as much the outcome of a process of trial, error and adaptation as our bodies; they are as little to be relied upon in new situations as our animal instincts. In the presence of immense new occasions thought must be immensely experimental. It has to be at once bold and sceptical. But in the face of the tremendous occasions of our own time it has hitherto been pitifully timid and blindly credulous of, and confident in, the working assumptions of the past.

I took up my pen not to review or discuss Professor

Robinson's book, which every intelligent person will very soon be reading, but to pay my personal tribute to its inspiration. It is a cardinal book. I question whether in the long run people may not come to it, and the School of Social Research associated with it, as marking a new and characteristic American initiative in the world's thought and methods, far more important than the Washington disarmament conference.

[1923]

COUNT KEYSERLING'S 'EUROPE'

By
ANDRÉ MAUROIS

Keyserling déclarait l'an dernier à un journaliste français qu'il était un homme dynamique. C'est exact. Son esprit est une force, et c'est une force qui peut utilement mettre en mouvement d'autres esprits. Il est un des rares hommes de ce temps qui pense à des problèmes généraux et que contraint les autres à y penser. Sur le résultat de ses réflexions, on peut être en désaccord avec lui et certes, en lisant *Europe*, plusieurs fois je me suis révolté contre l'auteur. Ces révoltes même sont fécondes. Un livre plat n'irrite pas; il endort.

Mais nous parlerons de révolte plus loin. Je voudrais d'abord aborder Keyserling comme il aborde lui-même, dans les *Voyages d'un Philosophe*, les civilisations si différentes qu'il y décrit, avec sympathie et désir de comprendre. Avant de critiquer une doctrine il faut essayer, pour la connaître, de coïncider avec elle.

Que nous apporte ce nouveau livre? Un essai sur les caractères des diverses nations européennes. Le choix du sujet pose une première question. Est-il possible de faire ainsi de la psychologie nationale? Keyserling lui-même soulève très honnêtement l'objection et cite un propos de Benckendorff: 'Ne dites pas *les* Allemands; il n'y a que des Allemands'. Aristote disait déjà: 'Je vois bien ce cheval, mais je ne vois pas la chevaléité'. Or, ce qui est vrai des Allemands,

l'est aussi des Anglais, des Italiens, des Français. Peut-on trouver des traits communs à Mr. Rudyard Kipling et à Mr. Ramsay MacDonald? A M. Mussolini et à M. Guglielmo Ferrero? A M. Edouard Herriot et à M. Paul Bourget? Keyserling pense que cela est possible, et voici à peu près ce qu'il nous décrit.

Le trait essentiel de l'Anglais est à ses yeux que celui-ci est une créature d'instinct et non d'intelligence. L'Anglais a un préjugé contre la pensée. Il est vrai que souvent l'Anglais affirme sa foi en des doctrines, en des théories, mais doctrines et systèmes sont en réalité construits par lui après l'action et pour expliquer celle-ci. Jamais un homme d'état anglais n'a formulé le plan conscient et défini de bâtir un empire mondial. L'empire s'est fait par une série d'actions instinctives et, quand il a été fait, les Anglais ont inventé l'impérialisme et le *white man's burden.* Cette prédominance de l'instinct assure à l'Anglais un contact plus immédiat avec la nature et avec les collectivités dont il fait partie. Il est fidèle à son pays, à son parti, non par raisonnement mais par *loyalty.* De là se déduit tout naturellement le respect de l'adversaire, dont l'Anglais admet aisément les *loyalties* secondaires. Ce respect des autres a fait de l'Anglais *a born ruler.* Mais Keyserling, tout en jugeant le type anglais comme un des meilleurs qu'aient produit, dans le passé, notre civilisation le considère comme inadapté aux réalités du monde moderne: *The Englishman stands and falls by his part of ruler — he must play while others work for him. For he is essentially lazy.* L'Angleterre ne périra pas mais, si elle dure, ce sera sous une forme évoluée, toute différente, et que l'Anglais colonial, le New-Zélandais ou le Canadien, nous permet peut-etre d'imaginer.

Keyserling (qui se plaît à opposer la France à l'Angleterre) voit le trait essentiel du Français en la prédominance du conscient sur l'inconscient, de l'intelligence sur l'action. Selon

lui la grande force due Français a été, non d'inventer des formes nouvelles de pensée, mais de donner une forme claire aux pensées des autres. Par là il a été l'esprit le plus spécifiquement occidental, et, en dépit de changements de surface (révolutions) le peuple le plus conservateur du monde. Mais Keyserling pense que le Français a besoin, pour être à son aise, d'un monde stable, statique, et qu'il n'est pas adapté, lui non plus, à l'univers changeant d'après-guerre.

Je m'en tiendrai à ces deux caractères, parce que ce sont les seuls que je connais bien moi-même. Je signale cependant, pour leur beauté littéraire, les chapitres sur l'Espagne, la Suède, et celui sur les Etats Baltiques (Keyserling s'y montre poète autant que philosophe).

Maintenant quels sont les pays qui lui paraissent les mieux faits pour le monde nouveau? Naturellement, l'Allemagne et la Russie. De la Russie il ne parle pas, parce qu'il estime qu'elle a cessé d'être un état européen. Mais il analyse longuement le caractère allemand, dont le trait essentiel lui paraît être une objectivité absolue, c'est-à-dire une aptitude à accepter l'objet tel qui'l est donné, sans illusion et même sans désir d'illusion. Par exemple, selon Keyserling, la défaite et le traité de Versailles, étant devenus pour l'Allemagne des objets, sont aussitôt acceptés comme données par l'esprit allemand et deviennent, pour l'Allemagne moderne, le point de départ d'une activité plus féconde et plus constructrice que celles engendrées en France ou en Angleterre par la victoire.

Et c'est ici que j'en viens à ma révolte de lecteur. Il me semble (peut-être parce que je ne suis pas moi-même assez objectif) que Keyserling, dans ses profondes analyses, n'atteint pas toujours lui-même à la parfaite objectivité. Pourquoi veut-il, par exemple, que la France n'ait jamais été colonisatrice? Est-ce que le Maroc n'est pas un grand succès de colonisation? Est-ce que Lyautey n'est pas un Français

particulièrement typique? Pourquoi veut-il que la France et l'Angleterre soient, en ce moment, en opposition sur des frontières lointaines? Quel est le lieu de cette mystérieuse rivalité? Mais sans doute Keyserling me répondrait-il par l'épigraphe même de son livre: *For all of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* C'est parce que nous sommes tous subjectifs qu'il y a grand intérêt à que ce nous pensions en commun. Un homme comme Keyserling, qui possède à la fois une grande culture et un esprit européen, ne peut que nous y aider.

[1928]

A NEW DEFENCE OF POETRY

By
STEPHEN SPENDER

Mr. Michael Roberts' *Critique of Poetry* contains the most interesting work that he has written, and it will surprise and please even those who are already familiar with his work. The book is not, as the title might lead one to suppose, a complete summary of poetic theory; it is a rather discursive book, first of all discussing the position of modern criticism, then trying to define the reader's best approach to poetry, then a defence of modern poetry, and an attempt to link it up with the tradition of the past. Thus it takes its place in a peculiar branch of the English tradition: the tradition, going back to Sidney, of the writer who is himself a poet, and who, as has happened about once in every two generations, attempts to defend the poetry of his own generation by relating it with the main tradition of poetry.

Mr. Roberts has the advantage of a point of view which, besides being realistic, is constructive. At the moment his book is extremely welcome as an answer to Mr. John Sparrow's *Sense and Poetry*, which vaguely and inclusively charges almost all modern poetry with being unintelligible. Mr. Roberts sufficiently shows that, if modern poetry is difficult, there are excellent reasons for its being so. He never, as is sometimes the case with Mr. T. S. Eliot, allows his argument to lead him to a sort of logical cul-de-sac: and the

last chapters of his book, in which he discusses the relation of poetry to belief are an answer to Mr. Eliot's bald declaration that poetry can never be a substitute for religion: which is of course true in the strict sense in which (as people discovered during the war) there is no such thing as a real substitute for anything. But this does not alter the fact, as he points out, that 'a satisfactory poem makes life endurable'; and, when he says this, it is clear he means that life is only endurable with a religious belief.

Mr. Roberts uses his considerable erudition with great effect, because he has a gift for apt quotation. He is amusing when he compares Rupert Brooke with Teresa Hooley, and effective when he points out the parallels in the works of Eliot and Ezra Pound, but the best analogies he finds are those between modern poetry and modern scientific research. He has also a critical sensibility which reveals itself at its best often in casual sentences, extremely significant, which strike one at first almost as being in parenthesis. For example, he remarks that 'The Romantics were often so preoccupied with the intensity of their own feelings that their work frequently arouses, not similar feelings, but a detached admiration of the nobility and greatness of the poet's emotion'. This, of course, explains a great deal of the appeal of the romantic poets to adolescence.

Where I find myself least in agreement with him is in an assertion which is developed from an argument of Mr. I. A. Richards. 'Mr. Richards . . . [draws] a distinction between an intellectual belief, which is part of a logical system, and an emotional belief which we can hold as long as the logical context of our ideas is not in question.' Mr. Roberts goes on to illustrate this by pointing out that we can enjoy Godolphin's Nativity Poem without sharing his beliefs, etc. He then suggests: 'Possibly then, though we attempt to write poetry which will satisfy all intellectual and emotional demands

simultaneously, our objective may be unattainable, and we may be compelled to find our psychological harmony through poetry which intellectually we disbelieve.' This seems to mean that a poet whilst he is writing may know perfectly well that what he is writing is untrue: 'but never mind', he reflects, 'emotionally it is true all right'. This seems to me more like the attitude of mind which is considered desirable in a judge of the Aryan State, than a proper attitude for a poet. The business of a poet is surely not to maintain two conflicting standards of truth, but to define the conditions in which a belief is true. No one suggests that Keats believed in fairies: but he created an imaginary world in which fairies were possible. This world was not belied by the real world, or in conflict with it, because it had no relation to it at all. Poetry simply reproduces the conditions which are required for a statement to be true. What poetry above all avoids, except in the rarest instances (as in 'ripeness is all', or 'in his will is our peace') is the stating of absolute truth. Surely the point at which modern poetry becomes revolutionary, is the point where it tries to define truths which are related to the world around us: to politics and economics. It is revolutionary because it has retired altogether from the attempt to find satisfaction in the 'possible worlds' of mythology: it is back in the world which surrounds us.

[1934]

COLD GROUSE IN THE LARDER

A Story by

MALACHI WHITAKER

Mrs. Roper had worked for years 'at the Christmas cards' during the season, and could do almost everything with them, from aerographing to printing inserts on the platen machines that stank of benzine. She rather liked the benzine, as the first few whiffs always reminded her of the smell of roses.

She was a little, plain, dark woman, with coils of soft brown hair, a pale face, and spectacles. She looked much more efficient than she was.

The place in which she was working this year was very small; indeed, there were only seven girls there altogether. It was better to be with a big firm; you knew where you were, and were less liable to be sacked because of petty jealousy. Mrs. Roper was firmly convinced that many people were jealous of her, of her talents, her quickness and tidiness, her capacity for springing into any breach. The fact that her springs were often quite the wrong kind did not stop her. She would decide instantly what to do with a certain job of work, and often departed leaving hundreds of spoiled cards behind her, as well as a manager who had sworn himself inarticulate.

Bancroft and Beale's was not a bad sort of place, she thought. Those of the girls who agreed with her brisk statements she put down as nice; the others became a kind of

enemy, to be scored off. There was 'that Lorna' and 'that Maud', who actually flouted her, in spite of the fact that she was fifteen years older than they were. To-day they had played a trick on her; they had actually put a spoonful of scent in her tea at lunchtime, and she had been so much engrossed in a Scarlet Novel that she had not noticed until nearly the end. By that time, 'those cats' as she called them, had become almost stifled with their laughter. They said they had done it to make her a little sweeter, and even the two men had laughed with them.

She felt it was not an easy world for those who are growing old alone. All the afternoon she sat at her table, on which elastic bands sprawled like leeches, filling some rush orders. The room was dark, and had to be lit by gas. Outside there was sleet falling. People would be walking about in the big shops, buying things for Christmas, as she had once done. She thought it very hard that she had now to work for a living, but still she found a certain amount of variety in her life. In summer she usually got a job as waitress in a seaside café. This was not easy, but, as she said, she got the benefit of the sea air. Until Christmas, there were the Christmas cards; from then till summer she did odd jobs, washing and charring. Her one desire was to get a steady position, and stay in it all the year round. As surely as she did get work of a kind, she would come up against some difficulty or other; face it, as she thought, nobly, and find herself sacked.

'I'm frightened of no bosses,' she was in the habit of saying, 'They can't do nothing to me. I'm my own boss. I do what suits me, and if they don't like it they can lump it.' And she would disobey orders, or change them round to suit herself, nearly always disastrously. And nobody knew that inside her was a small, frightened nut of a Mrs. Roper, rattling about in a case, growing smaller, more shrunken and useless with the years.

She very rarely used her memory, not having much desire to recall the past. But this afternoon a new type of card had come in. On it some grouse were rising from a brown and purple moor. The moor meant nothing to Mrs. Roper, she had never had much use for scenery, but the grouse meant a good deal.

When she was first married she had found that her young husband was without ambition of any kind. That was a great disappointment. Mrs. Roper rather fancied having a car, and a telephone, so that she need not walk to the shops unless she felt inclined. She wanted a house filled with expensive furniture; but for some reason she had wanted Harry Roper, temporarily, beyond all these. So she married him, and after a while settled down into a nagging wife.

Harry Roper was not to be driven towards riches. Even when her uncle Angus died and left her some money, he was not pleased. He only said, 'Why didn't the old codger spend it instead of giving it to you?'

But she kept on at him until eventually he had taken the money she was always trying to thrust upon him, and set himself up in business. 'How are you getting on?' she would ask, and her husband would make some sort of a reply to her, saying that things were looking up, or down, as the case might be. She got her car, and a telephone, and thought that now she was really a lady.

But the one thing she wanted most was to have some grouse to eat, and she really wished to enjoy them. She had read somewhere that it was a sign of good taste, and her latest desire was to have above all things good taste. So she bought a brace at the poulterers, and cooked them in butter, with a slice of bacon over their plump breasts. She could not help thinking that they looked dark and unappetising.

Harry did not come home when they were ready, so she cut into one and began to eat it. The first mouthful she

tasted seemed to her so bitter that she spat it out and hastily took a drink of water. She tried in another place, and found the same fault. It was a poor bird, full of small shot also; impossible to eat. Picking up all of that grouse, she threw it into the fire. If she did not have good taste, nobody should know but herself. She left the other one whole on the dish.

Her husband was late. He had been late a good many times this last month, and he seemed to be drinking, too. She would have to be telling him about that; it wouldn't do for a man in his position. Life was very difficult for an ambitious woman. Harry was really slack, he did not seem to want to make money. She was now running up bills. To her requests, he always answered, 'I'll bring something home to-morrow,' and then arrived without it.

She thought she would go to the theatre. She had no servant, and did everything for herself, fancying herself as a saving wife. So she wrote a note, stuck it in front of the large mirror which rested on the mantelshelf, and got ready to go out. She put on the note, 'If you are hungry, there is some cold grouse in the larder'. As she was writing this, an exquisite feeling came over her, which she could not explain; but it seemed at that moment that she had reached the very pinnacle of her desires.

She went to the theatre, yet could not enjoy the play. She felt anxious to go home and see what Harry was doing with his cold grouse. Before the end, she left quickly.

When she got back to the house several lights were burning. Harry was going from room to room packing things in a bag. Her note was still sticking to the side of the mirror, but the top corner of it had curled over in the heat.

'What's the matter, Harry?' she called in a strong, loud voice.

Harry appeared at the top of the stairway, buttoning up the

waistcoat of his best suit. He looked truculent, and his hair needed a brush. He ran downstairs quickly.

'What's the matter?' he echoed, standing so close to her that their nose ends nearly touched. 'The business is bust, that's all, and I'm hopping it.'

'What on earth do you mean? Where are we to go?' she asked, looking at him with unwinking eyes.

'We're going nowhere,' he answered, 'I'm going, and you can shift for yourself. You've been asking for it long enough.'

'What about my uncle Angus's money?' she asked, frowning dangerously.

'You and your uncle Angus, and your cold grouse,' he answered contemptuously, 'They give me a pain in the neck.'

These were the last words she heard from Harry. In spite of her protests, and even the blows which she rained on his departing back, he was not to be moved from his purpose.

The light died in the street outside. A burst of sleet pattered against the windows of the long room. 'That Maud' shivered. 'I've got my thin shoes on. I *shall* get wet going home.'

Mrs. Roper pushed the last of the sheets of paper into the Christmas card with the grouse on it, and looked up. 'Just like you girls,' she said, beginning one of her favourite lectures, 'Experience'll never teach you anything.'

'Who's passed these inserts?' called out the foreman, holding up some sheets. 'They're all wrong, every bloomin' one of 'em!'

'I did.'

The nut inside Mrs. Roper rattled and shrunk a little more, but no change was noticeable on the outside.

[1930]

PHANTOM LOBSTER

By
STORM JAMESON

In the years before the War the early morning train from Whitby to Scarborough had three compartments reserved for children — among them the writer of this article — travelling to the Scarborough Secondary School. The train moved, very slowly, along the coast, stopping at every village to pick up farmers, market-women with their baskets, and children. The children were a noisy destructive set, the bane of porters and stationmasters. One boy who used to join the train at Robin Hood's Bay was more mischievous than any. He was short, sturdy, brown, with very bright eyes. His innate wickedness impressed itself even on our hardened spirits. One morning when the train was drawn up at a station there was a terrific crash — someone in the road had overturned a load of milk churns — the noise was frightful, like the end of the world. Without troubling to look out of the window the girl next me exclaimed: 'That will be that Leo Walmsley.' No one disagreed with her.

What happened to that Leo Walmsley between that day and this cannot have been either dull or usual. I have only small fragments in my possession. But the whole pattern of any man's life is little more clear to his own mind than to the eyes of the onlooker. This is true of the simplest life — and Leo Walmsley's life until this moment cannot have been simple or lacking in violent contrasts. This book offers one

corner of the pattern — and it is enough to display the toughness of the threads and the variety and richness of the colours.

Phantom Lobster is the story of one year, during which, though all but the last weeks of it were spent in the fishing village he calls Bramblewick (it is the village at which he used to join the train), poor and in debt, he lived through all the fears and hopes, the intense excitement, of the creator. What he created was not, as you would suppose, a book (though that, too, was waiting its turn), but a new kind of lobster pot. The story of this invention, and of what became of it, is more exciting than any romance. And as if it had lain in his mind for some time before he wrote it, other things have grown into the story — there are tantalizing glimpses of his childhood in Bramblewick, of an artist father and a mother 'handicapped by a terrifying pride . . . by a powerful strain of puritanism, by an Irish imagination, tempered only a little by the solid Lancashire strain that was in her.' I hate to think what the mother must have endured in her fierce struggle to save her own spirit and her children alive from the natural hostility of Bramblewick. I know Bramblewick people. One side of my own family is Bramblewick. Whitby itself is no better or softer. Here not long since I passed a woman as she was exclaiming: 'You may have lived here for twenty years but you're still a stranger, and if they don't take to you you might as well be *dead*.' The author of *Phantom Lobster* understands this enduring savagery which lies under the 'kindness itself' of Bramblewick people. Casual visitors meet the kindness: 'foreigners' who come to stay wake the mistrust and enmity. No doubt it goes back to the Scandinavian root of the stock. These people have all the virtues of a northern race, bred in isolation and hardships. 'Bramblewick men made good seamen . . . They were sober, diligent, courageous, close-lipped, and close-fisted. They saved. They bought shares in the brigs, and barques, and schooners in

which they sailed.' When a Bramblewick man makes money he moves Up-Bank to a villa. The fishermen live in the close-packed houses and cottages of the old village, built on the sides of a steep cliff. Of the two families which appear in this book (under the names they bore in that remarkable novel *Three Fevers*) one, the Lunns, are 'foreigners,' having come to Bramblewick years earlier from a place only twenty miles down the coast. In them you would not meet the mocking inquisitive Bramblewick smile, that sharp ironic twinkle in the eyes, that air of despising you even when the words are friendly. My goodness, I should not like to be a foreigner, either in Whitby or Bramblewick. Now that I know what 'that Leo Walmsley' was having to put up with I feel an intense admiration for the air of jaunty devilry with which he boarded the train. It must have been needed in those Down-Bank fights.

In this particular year, the year of *Phantom Lobster*, he lived in Bramblewick alone. He was preparing to write a book which should convey the real Bramblewick, the people themselves, their hardness, their courage, their magnificent undying pride, born of their centuries-old feud with the sea. The idea of the new lobster pot came to him in talk with his friend Marney Lunn. Lobster fishing is the only branch of inshore fishing which has not been ruined by close-in trawling. But the pots are easily broken. If you had a pot which shut up, so that a greater number could be stored in the coble, you could go off into deep water. And if the hoops were of iron instead of hazel wood, to withstand the force of the sea, you could go on fishing two months longer, into November. He abandoned the current pot boiler, let the book on Bramblewick wait, and set himself to invent such a lobster pot.

He did invent it. The stages of the invention are related with an eagerness which does not account for the intense interest in the reader's mind. Such intensity must spring

from the fact that a spiritual adventure accompanies the material one. Something is happening in Leo Walmsley's mind while he feels his way through the difficulties of his idea. The first improvised pot works, the second and better model doesn't. Too concentrated to eat or light his fire he puzzles over it until he sees what is wrong and puts it right. The chance sight of an iron gate suggests a radical improvement. We live with him through the almost unbearable excitement of testing and finding it, after an initial disappointment, perfect.

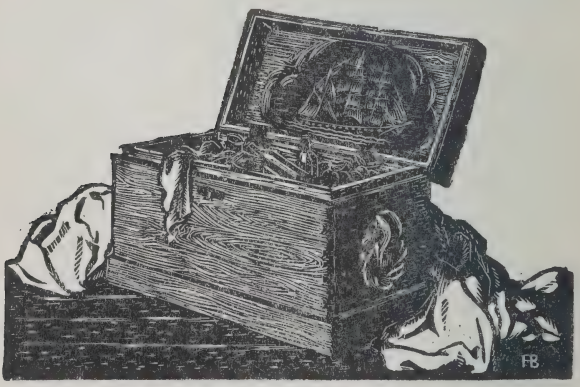
The new pot is everything it ought to be. The Lunns are enthusiastic, the creator sees himself the owner of a model factory, the Lunns owners of a fleet of cobles, the whole fishing industry revived and enriched by his efforts. He forgets to reckon with the economic obstacles. The first shows itself when a manufacturer tells him that no invention, however marvellous, is any 'use' unless its cost of production is 'at least 400 per cent less than its selling price'. Still he hopes. He secures an introduction to a well-known financier. He has twenty pots made and they are tested by the District Inspector of Fisheries and thoroughly approved. In his mind the model factory now expands to become a great co-operative organization — all sprung from his original impulse to help a breed of men which has been hard hit by economic developments, so hard that in spite of these men's indomitable courage the breed may even die out — a deep and irremediable loss to this country.

What happened to Leo Walmsley when he went to London, to find a man willing to provide the comparatively tiny sum necessary to start the enterprise, has a wider significance than in its effects on his own life and hopes, and on the Lunns. Through all this very important closing section we are conscious of the subtle insistent contrast — conflict would be the better word — between the spirit which moves

London and the Bramblewick spirit. It was the height of the great speculative boom. He saw a number of people, the managing director of a great store, a shipping magnate, a banker, two or three financiers, a Labour politician. In the end he went back to Bramblewick. What he took with him was neither promises nor money — but something rarer, the stirring of another creative impulse. From which came that splendid and memorable book, *Three Fevers*.

Phantom Lobster has the qualities of the true saga — it relates and praises acts of courage, it deals with men's actions in hard circumstances, and it expresses the spirit of a race. The final stroke of irony, which comes when the inventor sees what in his absence the Lunns have done to his lobster pot, is magnificently in keeping. This is an unusual, a striking, a deeply valuable book.

[1933]



JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY

By
H. M. TOMLINSON

Perhaps the name of none of our critics of letters is so likely to cause a lively outburst in a literary circle as that of Middleton Murry. Moreover, I have said the same about him myself. For prompting sudden and even noisy petulance in those who know him, and in those who don't, and won't, but always read him, Murry has a special gift. It comes easy to him, but he is blissfully unaware that it is his. It always astonishes him to observe so strange a consequence on his friends of one of his unimpassioned tussles with a literary problem. You can see the pain and wonder in his eyes. Anxious, absorbed, pale, and faintly smiling, the difficulty not exactly overcome, but maybe even increased — Murry has a native difficulty in claiming to have done more than deepen to a profounder mystery any literary problem — he looks up confidingly, and discovers that we are swearing at him as heartily as though he had lost every train in the time-table for us. And he never knows why. For that matter, neither do we; unless, indeed, startled by our own heat, we take the trouble to think the matter out, when, of course, obliging reason and logic supply us with anything we care to select to justify a natural prejudice. All prejudices are quite natural and are easily justified.

I remember that once as literary editor of a weekly review I wrote to our principal reviewer (J. M. Murry), and told

him, in effect, to take his last contribution to the devil; that I would sooner resign than pass it. That was the culmination of a correspondence long and bickering. What it was all about I cannot clearly recall; my only remaining conviction about it is that I must have been right, for I was so angry. Perhaps it is that Murry leads us on nicely for a time — we feel quite at home with him — we are grateful to find that he has the good taste to corroborate our literary opinions; and unexpectedly it is not so. That is not fair of him. We are astonished to observe that this critic, whose taste resembles ours, not only holds but publishes an opinion about D. H. Lawrence which would be comic if it did not wear such an aspect of sublimated gravity. And why does he think that novelist the greatest of the young moderns? 'Because,' says Murry, 'Lawrence is *sincere*.' As if the cat which steals the morning bloater were not absolutely sincere about it! As another writer once put it, the urchins who scrawl impudicities on public walls are impelled thereto in all sincerity.

We will suppose it is his occasional and resolute inconsequence, unexpected in one who has so still a respect for what is noble in literature that it amounts to a religious conviction, which at times makes us swear at Murry instead of swearing by him. For it must be confessed that it is not usual to-day to find a journalist of Murry's reputation so lost in a re-examination of Keats — and lost for weeks and weeks — that he had completely forgotten the fact that he is the editor of a monthly review which is close to another publishing day. But Murry is like that.

I fear we are inclined to regard that extreme particularity, which is really nothing but a symptom of fanaticism, as a pose; for we need not bother about poses; and anything that will suffice as an excuse for not examining a matter which might detain us if we stopped is welcome. But Murry's pre-occupation with obscurities is not a pose. He wants to

know. He is determined to find out, if that is possible, even though his absorbtion with a mystery detain him long enough to ruin the review of which he is editor. He continues to want to know, and to peer into the dark, even after a confession that he can see nothing there, and that perhaps he is wasting our time as well as his own. He is really most interested in the springs of thought and conduct. He persists in asking the Sphinx why Shakespeare concluded he could do nothing beyond the tragedies, knowing perfectly well that the poet himself must have addressed a question rather like it to the same quarter. And where is the answer? The fact, however, that he can get no answer where Shakespeare failed to get one is merely but another incentive to Murry to continue his adventure with added zest. There is something in life after all, with such a wonder about us. There is something attractively queer in life, when it is placed precariously by our finest minds where it can peer into an unutterable and starless gulf. Murry, led to the verge by the great poets, now cannot keep away from it. That outer darkness is to him more wonderful than the sun. And ought not we to own up? The examination of literature, from such a standpoint, undoubtedly is not thereby lessened in value.

[1924]

GREENWOOD OF SALFORD

By
HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

The unemployment novel is fiction's youngest category. Its birth month can be fixed by the fact that in June, 1933, Mr. Walter Greenwood made himself, by the publication of *Love on the Dole*, literature's first spokesman of the unemployed. 'You have noticed,' he seemed to say, 'the unemployment statistics in the papers. Permit me to point out what unemployment means to human beings.' With the double effectiveness of a man who had personal experience of unemployment, and of a writer with innate powers of expression he wrote a novel about the idle poor, about the unmanning of men by boredom without means of alleviation and by their consciousness of being unwanted.

He did what the professional novelists had decided not to attempt. Before the war there was, indeed, a memorable book by a house-painter, *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*. That work of crude genius was, however, rather about employment than unemployment which in the modern sense of mass helplessness had not then been invented. Fiction's first impulse after the war was to forget it, to be bright about anything except the war. Then came the war novel, usually the anti-war novel, and after that where in the world were the subjects more made for the novelist's pen than the economic consequences of war? They could not be ignored, nor were they in their politer aspects, but the

common man, resourceless first victim both of industrial catastrophe and of labour-saving mechanical progress, was fiction's outcast. He was 'uncomfortable' and it may safely be generalized that the novel-buying public did not want to read about him.

Mr. Greenwood's novel changed all that by its particular and passionate emotion of the man who had been there. Imaginative writers make guesses, inspired sometimes, about for example the psychology of murderers, and it is not doubted that Shakespeare guessed rightly about Macbeth. The novelist who draws an autobiography does not need to guess, but only to express. Take Mr. Leo Walmsley's *Foreigners*. Take *Love on the Dole*. There is, of course, invention in them: incidents of fiction are invented to convey truth guaranteed authentic by personal experience.

That, in itself, would not compel Stevenson's 'hesitating purchaser' to plank down seven and sixpence, but the subject — the soul of man under unemployment — of *Love on the Dole* was inevitable, and not only was Mr. Greenwood not an outsider looking in but he was an insider who wrote a superlatively readable novel. His fiction has shape, and it never forgets that to entertain on this level or that is fiction's first business. For my own part, impressed as I am by the technical competence of his first novel and by its being the first to seize upon its inevitable theme, I am still more impressed by its character-drawing in general, and in particular by the grand Hogarthian figure of Mrs. Nattle.

It is at once a rebuke to civilization — Hogarth died in 1764 — and proof of the vitality of Lancashire sap that Mrs. Nattle and other coarse Hogarthian characters should exist to-day. They do exist, superbly alive in Mr. Greenwood's pages, and how conveniently for a novelist writing now when (*The Beggar's Opera* and all that) we are inclinable to see life in the eighteenth-century terms! The manners of the

sturdy harridans of the Salford slums can be treated robustly for our modern tolerance without Victorian fastidiousness.

A first novel, however good and especially when autobiographical, leaves one guessing about its author's future. *His Worship the Mayor* lacks the emotional drive of *Love on the Dole*, but in taking new stance, in satirizing jacks-in-office, with the tragedy of Joe Shuttleworth set poignantly in comedy, it extends its author's range and nourishes the hope that in Mr. Greenwood we have found our great provincial novelist.

May he never, as novelist, quit the provinces as Arnold Bennett did! In Salford Mr. Greenwood has better luck than Bennett had in the Five Towns with, practically, a single industry. Salford has variety: docks, coal-mines, cotton-mills, engineering shops. And Salford, if you look for it, has a kind of beauty — the Irwell down Agecroft way and that great view from the Crescent looking across the Kersal heights, with the tall chimneys of the Adelphi which by haphazard compose an artist's picture, while the sooty brick of Salford houses, boxes in monotonous rows as they are, has warmth for the eye; it hasn't, at least, the chilly grey stone of the Pennine towns nor the repulsive dead yellow of stuccoed Camden Town.

Lancashire, cock-pit of industrialism as Flanders of war! They have survived steam, the brutal beginnings of the factory system, the Cotton Famine. They will survive the present. 'Ah'm hard and by God y'need to be,' says Sally Hardcastle, who extracted a settlement from the fat bookmaker before she went to him. There are rich findings for a novelist amongst such realists of the north.

ARABIAN TRAVELLERS

By
T. E. SHAW
(T. E. LAWRENCE)

[This article was not actually written for *Now and Then*, but conveyed thither by an agile editor, without word said. It was born of a desire by Mr. Bertram Thomas, the Arabian traveller, to have something waving like a flag in front of his book (*Arabia Felix*, 1932) and it betrays the defects of its origin; with, let us hope, some of its merits. T. E. S.]

Thomas shocked me when he asked for a foreword to his great journey-book, not because introductions put me off (he may as reasonably enjoy them, perhaps), but because he had recourse to me. It took me some while to think out so strange a lapse.

You see, in my day there were real Arabian veterans. Upon each return from the East I would repair to Doughty, a looming giant, white with eighty years, headed and bearded like some renaissance Isaiah. Doughty seemed a past world, in himself; and after him I would visit Wilfrid Blunt. An Arab mare drew Blunt's visitors deep within a Sussex wood to his quarried house, stone-flagged and hung with Morris tapestries. There in a great chair he sat, prepared for me like a careless work of art in well-worn Arab robes, his chiselled face framed in silvered, curling hair. Doughty's voice was a

caress, his nature sweetness. Blunt was a fire yet flickering over the ashes of old fury.

Such were my Master Arabians, men of forty, fifty years ago. Hogarth and Gertrude Bell, by twenty years of patient study, had won some reputation, too; and there were promising young officers, Shakespear and Leachman, with a political, Wyman Bury, beginning well. To aspire Arabian-wise, then, was no light, quick ambition.

They are all gone, those great ones. The two poets were full of years and in high honour. Naturally they died. The war burdened Hogarth and Gertrude Bell with political responsibilities. They gave themselves wholly, saw their work complete and then passed. The three younger men died of their duty, directly; and that is why Thomas must come down to me.

I suppose no new Sixth Former can help feeling how much his year falls short of the great fellows there when he joined the school. But can the sorry little crowd of us to-day be in the tradition, even? I fear not. Of course the mere wishing to be an Arabian betrays the roots of a quirk; but our predecessors' was a larger day, in which the seeing Arabia was an end in itself. They just wrote a wander-book and the great peninsula made their prose significant. (Incidentally, the readable Arabian books are all in English, bar one; Jews, Swiss, Irishmen and Whatnots having conspired to help the Englishmen write them. There are some German books of too-sober learning and one Dutch.) Its deserts cleaned or enriched Doughty's pen and Palgrave's, Burckhardt's and Blunt's, helped Raunkiaer with his Kuweit, Burton and Wavell in their pilgrimages, and Bury among his sunstruck Yemeni hamlets.

Our feebler selves dare not be Arabians for Arabia's sake — none of us save Rutter, I think, and how good, how classical, his book! The rest must frame excuses for travelling. One

will fix latitudes, the silly things, another collect plants or insects (not to eat, but to bring home), a third make war, which is coals to Newcastle. We fritter our allegiances and loyalties.

Inevitable, of course, that these impurities should come. As pools shrink they stench. Raleigh could hearten my ancester — 'Cozen, we know but the hand's-breadth of our world' — but since him Arctic and Antarctic, the wastes of Asia and Africa, the forests of America have yielded their secrets. Last year I could have retorted — 'There is but a hand's-breadth we do not know' — thinking of that virgin Rub'al Khali, the last unwritten plot of earth big enough for a sizable man's turning in twice or thrice about, before he couches. However, only these few paragraphs of mine now stand between appetite and the tale of its conquest. To-day we know the whole earth. Would-be wandering youth will go unsatisfied till a winged generation lands on the next planet.

Few men are able to close an epoch. We cannot know the first man who walked the inviolate earth for newness' sake: but Thomas is the last; and he did his journey in the antique way, by pain of his camel's legs, single-handed, at his own time and cost. He might have flown an aeroplane, sat in a car, or rolled over in a tank. Instead he has snatched, at the twenty-third hour, feet's last victory and set us free. Everything having been once done in the slowest fashion we can concentrate upon speed, amplifying the eye of the tortoise by the hare's and the bird's. All honour to Thomas. The Royal Geographical Society itself forgives, bemedals its supersessor . . . also he has an O.B.E.

I will not say how much I like this book, lest Jonathan C. dig out the odd sentence for his blurb. Thomas let me read the draft, and I then did my best to comment usefully; once remarking that the tale was good enough for his journey —

no faint judgment, set against what I think the finest thing in Arabian exploration. As he tells it, the achievement may read easy, because he is a master of every desert art. Here once more is the compleat Arabian traveller enshrined. Not twice but twenty times his tiniest touches set me remembering that wide land which I liked so much, twenty years ago, and hoped never to feel again. Thence, I suppose, the reason of my writing him this useless foreword; this and my understanding of his risks. Only by favour of a propitious season could this very rare individual, after infinite care and tact in preparation, have gambled his life upon the crowning solidarity which the desert owes to Ibn Sa'ud, and won through. Thomas is as fortunate as deserving.

[1932]

THE GLEANER

A Story by
H. E. BATES

She is very old, a little sprig of a woman, spare and twisted. The sun is hardly past its noon. She has climbed uphill out of the town, up the hot, white road, eager, fretting footsteps, half-running, half-walking, as though afraid that some other gleaner will have come up before her. But as far as she can see, into a distance of mellow light under a sky as mild and wonderfully blue as the stray chicory-stars still blooming among the stiff yellow grasses by the roadside, the world is empty. She is alone, high up, insignificantly solitary in a world of pure untrembling light that pours straight down, washing away the summer-green gloom from the tops of the still trees. There is not even the stirring of a sheep over the land or the flickering of a bird in the sky; nothing to alarm or rival or distract her. Yet she goes on always with that fretting eagerness, as though afraid, not resting or satisfied until she sees the wheatfield before her, empty like the rest of the earth except for that downpour and flood of golden light upon its stubbled slope.

She pushes open the gate, clicks it shut behind her, flaps open her sack, takes one swift and comprehensive glance at the field, and bends her back. Her fingers are rustling like quick mice over the stubble, and the red wheat ears are rustling together in her hands before she has taken another step forward. There is no time for looking or listening or

resting. To glean, to fill her sack, to travel over that field before the light is lost; she had no other purpose than that and could understand none.

Long ago, in another century, she also came up to this same field, on just such still, light-flooded afternoons, for this same eternal and unchanging purpose. But not alone; they would glean then, in families, occasionally in villages, with hand-carts and barrows, from early morning until evening, from one gleaning-bell to another. Since it meant so much, since corn was life — that law was as old as time itself — they gleaned incessantly, desperately. Every ear on the face of every field had to be gathered up, and she can remember her mother's fist in her back, harrying her to glean faster, and how, in turn, she also urged her children to go on and on, never to rest until the field was clear and the light had died.

She is already away from the gate, moving quickly out into the field away from the ruts that the wagons have cut and the ears they have smashed into the sun-baked soil. She moves with incredible quickness, fretfully, almost as fearfully as she came up the hill. In her black skirt and blouse, and with her sharp white head for ever near the earth, she looks like a hungry bird, always pecking and nipping at something, never resting, never satisfied.

Her sleeves are rolled up, showing her thin, corn-coloured arms, with the veins knotty and stiff about her bony wrists. Her hands seem to be still young in their quickness and vitality, like the young tips of an old tree, and the intent yet tranquil look on her face is eternal. It is a little, sharp, fleshless, million-wrinkled face; it is like a piece of wood, worn down by time, carved down pitilessly and relentlessly, the softness of the cheeks and mouth and eyes scooped out to make deep hollows, the bone of the cheeks and chin and forehead left high and sharp as knots in the wood. As though years of sun-flooded days in gleaning fields had stained it, the flesh is a

soft, shining corn colour. Even the blue dimness of her eyes has become touched by the faintest drop of this corn-coloured radiance — the colour of age, of autumn, of dying, almost of death itself.

In the open field the sun is very hot. Beating down from an autumn angle the force of its light and heat falls full on her back or into her eyes as she zig-zags up and down or across the stubble-rows. She appears to move carelessly, without method, gleaning chance ears as she sees them; she moves, in reality, by instinct, to some ancient and inborn system, unconsciously, but surely as a bird. Miraculously she misses scarcely an ear. She moves incessantly, she looks tireless. Sometimes she glances quickly over her shoulder, across the field, into the sky, with brief unconscious anxiety about something, but the world is empty.

It is as though there is no one in the world except herself who gleans any longer. She is not merely alone: she is the last of the gleaners, the last survivor of an ancient race. Nevertheless, moving across the field under the mellow sun, nipping up the ears in her quick hands, shaking her sack, dragging it over the stubble, she looks eternal. She is doing something that has been done since the beginning of time and is not conscious of it; she is concerned only with the ears, the straws, the length of the stubble, the way she must go. She scarcely notices even the flowers, ground blooming and creeping flowers that the binder cannot touch, little mouse-carpets of periwinkle and speedwell, purple coronets of knapweed, trumpets of milk-coloured and pink convolvulus, a scabious bursting a mauve bud, bits of starry camomile. Occasionally she is impatient at something — at the straggling length of the stubble, the riot of thistle and coltsfoot that chokes the rows. Nowadays the binder leaves the straw so long and shaggy. Nobody hoes any longer, nobody gleans, nobody troubles. The crop is poor and uneven, and she comes

across wastes of thin straw and much green rank twitch where the earth is barren of corn and she scarcely picks an ear, though she never straightens her back and never ceases that mouse-quick searching with her brown hands.

But later, in the heat of the afternoon, with her sack filling up and the sun-heat and bright light playing unbrokenly upon her, she begins unconsciously to move more slowly, a little tired, like a child that has played too long. She will not cover the field, and as she moves there, always solitary, up and down the stubble empty except for herself and a rook or two, she begins to look smaller and the field larger and larger about her.

At last she straightens her back. It is her first conscious sign of weariness. She justifies it by looking into the sky and over the autumn-coloured land sloping away to the town; briefly she takes in the whole soft-lighted world, the effulgence of wine-clear light on the trees and the dove-coloured roofs below and a straggling of rooks lifting heavily off the stubble and settling farther on again.

She stoops and goes on once more; and then soon, another rest, another glance into the sky, and then another beginning. Very soon there is a thistle pricking her hand, and she is glad to stop and pull it out and suck the place with her thin lips.

Ahead of her there is a hedge of hawthorn and blackberry, with great oaks that throw balloons of shadow across the field. She moves into the oak-shade with relief; it is cool, like a drink of water, like a clean white sheet; and the coolness fills her with a new vitality, so that she goes on gleaning for a long time without needing to rest.

By and by she is working along the hedge. Straws have been plaited and twisted by wind among the hawthorn and blackberry and wild clematis and sloe, and she goes along picking them off, twisting them together and dropping them into her sack, her body upright. It is easier. She can smell the darkening blackberries, the first dying odour of leaves.

She stops to gather and eat a dewberry, squeezing it against her palate like a dark grape; to rub the misty purple-green bloom off a sloe with her fingers.

There are many straws on the hedge. The sack is heavy. She walks very slowly, dragging it, wondering all the time why she does not lift it to her shoulder and start for home, but something stronger than herself keeps her picking and gleaning, missing nothing.

It is not until the light begins to fail that she thinks of departing. She has begun to carry the sack in her arms, hugging it to her chest, setting it down at intervals and gleaning the stubble about it. There is no need to go on, but some inherent, unconscious, eternal impulse keeps her moving perpetually. But still she glances up sometimes with the old fear, wondering if some other gleaner will come.

She has worked towards the gate and there she sets down the sack and rests a moment. It is late afternoon; dark crowds of starlings are flying over and gathering in invisible trees, making a great murmuration in the late quietness. Before she can depart she must lift the sack to her back or lift it to the gate and bend her back beneath it. She is very tired. She might leave the sack under the hedge; she might come again to-morrow; but she suddenly catches the sack in her arms, hoists it to the gate with an immense effort as though her life depended upon it.

Her strength is not enough. The sack, very full, half falls back upon her, but in a moment she makes a tremendous effort and, as she makes it, lifting the sack slowly upright again, she feels her eyes, for some reason, fill with the stupid tears of age and weakness.

In a moment it is all over, forgotten. She makes a great effort to lift up the sack. She succeeds. The sack falls across her back, bearing her down, and she catches at its mouth, holds it and staggers away.

Her tears have stopped and she had not thought of wiping them away, and as she staggers off down the road towards the sunset they roll down among her million wrinkles and find their way to her mouth. She goes on without resting. She looks more than ever eternal, an earth-figure, as old and ageless and primitive as the corn she carries.

As she goes on, the light dies rapidly until there is only an orange glow in the western sky like the murky light of a candle. The air is cool, still, autumnal. Her tears have dried on her cheeks, and now and then she can taste the salt of them still on her lips: the salt of her own body, the salt of the earth.

[1933]

THE INVADERS

By
E. M. FORSTER

William Plomer will never write an epic, for which of course I am thankful. Yet part of the power he wields is that power of the epic narrator, that magic which stirs a cauldron wherein seethe limbs of men and gods. What will rise out of the cauldron at the climax, what comrade or wraith, what compensation for a civilization gone to pot? My heart asks this question of him, while my eyes read his straightforward prose and my brain admits that here is really no cauldron at all, only a row of saucepans. South Africa, Japan, Greece, London — Mr. Plomer has done some cooking at each. Why, when I lift their lids, do I feel that the contents transcend the containers? Why, though his equipment is so modest, does something significant intrude, something denied to writers who call upon heaven and earth to attest their profuseness and profundity, and produce every autumn longer and longer novels on greater and greater themes? Why does he get somewhere in his shirtsleeves and they get nowhere at all? It seems unfair. Think of the work that indefatigable genius W. G. Briden Bettershaw has put into his Northamptonshire trilogy, *Welt, Sole, Last!* What observation! What thoroughness! And what philosophy! Think how Miss Irene Grierson has suffered no aspects of Albania to escape her! Think of the Poundaway Saga! Here are epics if you like! But I do not like.

This new novel is a London one. Like *The Case is Altered* it handles disintegration, social and physical. Here are the middle classes, straitened, self-conscious, nervous, and by no means contemptible. And here are the working classes, nervous and jumpy in a different way, and driven by poverty and boredom to become window cleaners, house parlour-maids, guardsmen, prostitutes, crooks, in the metropolis. They are the invaders. In this particular episode they retire. But to describe them as defeated or the episode as a contest would be to narrow and to falsify William Plomer's outlook. Something deeper than fighting is involved, and something glorious may yet rise from the cauldron. Perhaps the human heart is in process of being reborn, and perhaps a great city is the only possible instrument for rebirth. Viewed in this light, the dinginess and casualness of London take a new aspect, and even the Marble Arch leads somewhere.

The Arch ('that squat anachronism') is the book's centre. Like the Bayswater boarding house in the earlier novel, it stands at the meeting of the ways and the encounters round it generate the action, encounters sinister, venal, romantic. We enter various worlds, only linked by their instability, the strangest of them perhaps being the world of the cavalry barracks. Over this further anachronism, which bears no relation to war and God knows what to peace, Mr. Plomer is at his most brilliant. On we go, on and round. It is not a well-constructed book. I should not like to have to analyse the plot. Things popping or exploding, sometimes loudly, sometimes very faintly — that is the sound it leaves behind. Nor am I interested in all of its characters and scenes. But if you care for a view of life which is implicit and not superimposed, and if you believe that affection and tenderness matter and that lust may involve love, you will feel about it as I do.

[1934]

THE CLASSICAL NOVELS OF NAOMI MITCHISON

By

JOHN SPARROW

Among the novelists of to-day Mrs. Mitchison is indeed a prodigy. She writes about the ancient world, yet her subjects are as alive as those of the novelist who takes the present day for his theme; she makes no concession to the ignorance of the modern reader, yet her novels sell in thousands; she does not claim to have an expert knowledge of Greece or Rome, or more than a smattering of their languages, yet her works earn the praise of scholars for their accuracy of detail and their truth of spirit. The driest pedant, so long as he remains alive to beauty and to passion, must appreciate those qualities in Mrs. Mitchison's novels; the most ignorant reader, on the other hand, cannot help feeling that her work is as direct and convincing as history itself. In short, Mrs. Mitchison is an artist and a remarkable one.

Part of her secret, it seems, is this. Her purpose is not didactic. Her people are not excuses for teaching us about

the classics. It is in them and not their setting that she is mainly interested. So we feel that we are reading not simply of Greeks or Romans, slaves or free men, but of persons living in a particular time and place — Lesbians, Mantineans, fifth-century Athenians, sailors, chariot-drivers, philosophers. Each breathes a different air; we are not expected to recognize them simply by their uniforms. Mrs. Mitchison is equally at home among the savages; her power of differentiating between barbarian temperaments is shown by her creation of Goth, Gaul, Hun and Viking — each recognizably a member of his race without ceasing to be an individual.

This singleness of artistic purpose ensures that Mrs. Mitchison gives its due importance to the background. She is telling us about the characters of her creation, their individual lives, actions, and passions. She must therefore tell us in detail of their circumstances — their dress, their houses, their habits, the way they spent their time. It is a proof of the seriousness of Mrs. Mitchison's art that this background falls into its proper place: it is part of the lives of her characters, instead of being simply a scene in which her people are nothing more than figures.

It is not unnatural that Mrs. Mitchison's characters should be more various than the situations in which they find themselves and the stories in which they play a part. In the world about which she has chosen to write, passions are simple and move directly towards their object, so that there is small scope for sophisticated emotion or complicated plot. Such material is particularly well suited to Mrs. Mitchison's gifts. For her peculiar talent is the power of description, especially description of physical sensations. Fear, lust, cruelty, love of battle, bodily exertion, and the pains and pleasures that attend it — life in the ancient world consisted largely of these, and it is these that Mrs. Mitchison most vividly conveys. In a world of rape and bloodshed she moves with

a delighted and familiar ease. She is never more herself than when describing the excitement of a hand-to-hand encounter, the dust and sweat of a long march, the pangs of childbirth, or the fierce mixture of sensations which inspire the ravisher and his victim. She could never achieve such poignancy if she did not write of such experiences as if each had at some time or other been her own.

Such passages *The Delicate Fire* has in plenty. The main part of the book tells the story of a circle of Mantinean citizens who were sold into slavery when their city was taken by King Antinonos. Mrs. Mitchison has ample opportunity of telling what a woman must have suffered as a slave in the Greek world, and she does so with something like relish. Yet she appreciates just as fully the superbness of the pride and the naturalness of the cruelty that gave rise to the sufferings that she describes. How far her direct personal method of narration is from moralizing, the following typical passage will reveal:

> 'In half an hour Nikippe came back. Her tunic was a little torn at the neck, and she had barked her knuckles. Antander lifted his head wretchedly; he could hardly manage to ask what had happened. But Nikippe said: "Darling, it was all rather funny, and he didn't get me after all. You see, I thought I might as well put it off as long as I could, so I hit him very hard. I made his nose bleed. Then he hit me and I got hold of his beard and then some of the other Macedonians came up and laughed quite a lot, and the end of it is that they've decided I shall sell for much more as a virgin, and they're going to sell me at Corinth."
>
> ' "Oh, god," groaned Antander, "that's to-morrow!" '

The realism of such a passage is due not to its false colloquialism, but to the imagination with which it was

conceived. And it is the realism of such passages that lends its force to a moral lesson which seems to dominate *The Delicate Fire* and thus to differentiate it from Mrs. Mitchison's earlier work. Kleta, its heroine, found in her own sufferings as a slave the means to a truer understanding of the dignity of human life, and brought her companions to the same high plane of vision, so that they inaugurated, at the end of the story, a community where all were equal and there was no need of decency, reticence, conventions. She seems to be offered as a model to the civilization of to-day. And this lesson Mrs. Mitchison reinforces in the sketches of modern society and its analogous problems, with which the volume closes. Mrs. Mitchison's imaginative sympathy with the proletariat of to-day is as indefatigable as that which she lavishes on the slave world of the Greeks; here, as there, her first aim is to free herself from the trammels which beset a writer who is, obviously, accustomed to circumstances that are comfortable and academic. There is no greater testimony to the power of her imagination than the fact that her success is greatest when among the obstacles that she had to overcome are not merely differences of class, habits, and outlook, but a distance of two thousand years and the difference between the English temperament and the Greek. *The Delicate Fire* is Mrs. Mitchison's most interesting book in that it provides examples of both kinds of imaginative effort.

[1933]

JESUS THE UNKNOWN

By
THE VERY REV. W. R. INGE, D.D.

When the publishers asked me to write a preface to this book, I hesitated for some time. I have often said that I have made a rule never to write prefaces. A book should stand or fall on its own merits. 'Good wine needs no bush', and a good book needs no extraneous commendation. I was therefore predisposed to decline at once.

The subject of the book increased my reluctance. Harnack said very truly that no biography of Jesus Christ can ever be written. The Synoptic Gospels do not conform to our notions of a biography. They are the creations of the faith and love of the primitive Church; and if they give a true picture of the character and teaching of the Founder, as I believe they do, that is because the first disciples had, as St. Paul says, 'the mind of Christ'. But they represent the earliest Christian preaching and apologetic; for example, nature-miracles and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies meant more to the first generation of Christians than they do to us. As for the Fourth Gospel, 'the spiritual Gospel' as it was called by its first readers, it is further still from being a biography in our sense. It is an inspired interpretation of the eternal significance of the Incarnation, addressed in the first instance to the third generation of Christians. In St. Paul's epistles, which contain hardly any information about the Galilean ministry, we can

trace what afterwards became the orthodox Christology in the making.

Why then have I broken my rule and written a preface to this book? I do not recommend it without reserve as a contribution to critical scholarship, though Merezhkovsky is a true scholar, well equipped on this side. His theory that the Fourth Gospel is a composite work seems to me improbable; and there are strange legends (e.g. on page 161) which, whether the author believes them or not — he does not make this very clear — I should be sorry to be supposed to accept. Above all, the author is a Russian, which means that his mentality is not European. There are strange and unexpected turns in his thought: for instance, he seems to have a horror of sex, even of innocent and natural sexuality, which is characteristic of Tolstoy and of other writers belonging to this nation.

But if these are defects, they are far outweighed by the deep spirituality, strange beauty, and originality of the book. We have become so accustomed to study Jesus Christ through Western eyes that it must be good for us to look at the Gospels as they appear to a semi-Oriental mind. Russia is neither Europe nor Asia; but in many ways it is nearer to the life of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire than England or France can ever be. Apart from the unfamiliar point of view, there are unusual and original features in the treatment; for instance, the author makes great use of the Agrapha — the uncanonical sayings attributed to our Lord.

Last, the nationality of the author gives the book a poignant interest at the present time. No Christian can doubt that the sorely persecuted Church of Russia will rise purified from the fire of affliction, and that it will have its own contribution to make to the Christianity of the future. The blood of the martyrs will once more be the seed of the Church. The eight or nine thousand bishops and priests of the Orthodox Eastern

Church who have been cruelly butchered by the Satanic fury of the Bolsheviks will not have died in vain. In this book we may perhaps guess something of what the restored Russian Church will be like. Since the days of the Greek Fathers the East has not been able to contribute its due share to the life and thought of the universal Church, which nevertheless are not complete without its co-operation.

[1933]

LAMORNA COVE

By

W. H. Davies

I see at last our great Lamorna Cove,
Which, danced on by ten thousand silver feet,
Has all those waves that run like little lambs,
To draw the milk from many a rocky teat,
Spilt in white gallons all along the shore.
Who ever saw more beauty under the sun?
I look and look, and say, 'No wonder here's
A light I never saw on earth before —
Two heavens are shining here instead of one'.
And, like the wild gulls flashing in my sight,
Each furious thought that's driving through my brain
Screams in its fresh young wonder and delight.

[1922]

H. E. BATES

By
DAVID GARNETT

There are all kinds of individual beauty in literature, every writer who is worth anything at all has his own scent which perfumes his stories and which people mistakenly call his style; though his style may vary according to the nature of his subject the scent remains the same. Thus one writer will smell of the village shop, of groceries, sawdust, soap, and blue packets of sugar, another of the stacks of peat drying on a desolate moorland, a third of the crypt, full of caps and coats, in a boys' school. Nothing is more foolish than to praise one good writer at the expense of another or a greater waste of time to try to arrange artists in order of merit. Thus though I believe that Bates is undervalued by most critics, I shall not try to exalt him by depreciating others. I will only say that for me the characteristic odour of his stories is that of lime blossom on a fresh summer's morning and that I can't think of anything more agreeable, or more delightful.

This collection of *Thirty Tales* has been chosen by himself from his already published work and it begins with what I consider to be his masterpiece: *Alexander*. That story appears to me to have a dewy freshness, not only of the subject, but of the author's perceptions. It is a memory of childhood — or perhaps I should say that it is constructed out of memories of childhood, and though such reminiscences are the most vivid things in literature, *Alexander* can take its place with

the most famous. Undoubtedly the boy in the cart is Bates, and the little pony, swishing its long tail must have travelled one of the roads I know well, over that bit of country which is as lovely as Bates describes, by Yelden with its romantic Castle Hill to Newton Bromswold or Melchbourne. Somewhere on the edge of those woods you must go to look for the cottage with goats and geese grazing outside it where Annie Fell lived, and further east, near Pertenhall, or even as far as Kimbolton, you can look for the green lawns, the decaying orchard and garden where the Old Tit lived alone with her seven bitches and her white cat.

But when you have judged him as a writer of short stories, remember that he has also several novels to his credit. The best of these, in my opinion, is *The Fallow Land*, a novel of an English farm, which has an extraordinary solidity. And unlike so many novels about country people the characters are individuals: they are not mere types whose stolid stockishness masquerades as strength. Not all his novels have this rare quality — for individuals are rare in modern novels — but there are intensely living people also in his novel *Charlotte's Row*. And there is no living English writer of whose future work I feel more confident. It is not that I do not think that Bates may write another bad book or even a very bad book. But I feel that both his best and his worst work are still exercises, as all the works of an artist must be who is developing his powers. I do not anticipate great works of astonishing originality, for to tell the truth great originality is not the distinguishing feature of any of Bates's work. His great merit is his astonishing sensibility. His subjects are not new, nor are we shown them in an unfamiliar lighting which can alter the aspect of ordinary things. What he succeeds in doing is to show them more clearly, more delicately and more tenderly than they have ever been shown before. There have been many painters with such a gift but very few writers.

This collection then will enable many readers to form a better idea of the work of a particularly charming writer, but it will not, I am glad to say, permit them to pass a final judgment. While Bates is alive that will have to undergo continual and I believe an ever more favourable revision. There will be more blossoms on the lime next year and more still the year after.

[1934]

GIOVANNI VERGA

By
D. H. LAWRENCE

The Verga family owned land around Vizzini, a biggish village in southern Sicily; and here, in and around Vizzini, the tragedies of Turiddu and La Lupa and Jeli take place. But it was only in middle life that the drama of peasant passion really made an impression on Giovanni Verga. His earlier imagination, naturally, went out into the great world.

But as a young man of twenty he already wanted to depart into the bigger world of 'the Continent', as the Sicilians called the mainland of Italy. It was the Italy of 1860, the Italy of Garibaldi, and the new era. Verga seems to have taken little interest in politics. He had no doubt the southern idea of himself as a gentleman and an aristocrat, beyond politics. And he had the ancient southern thirst for show, for lustre, for glory, a desire to figure grandly among the first society of the world. His nature was proud and unmixable. At the same time, he had the southern passionate yearning for tenderness and generosity. And so he ventured into the world, without much money; and, in true southern fashion, he was dazzled. To the end of his days he was dazzled by elegant ladies in elegant equipages: one sees it, amusingly, in all his books.

To this period belongs the curiously unequal novels of the city world: *Eva*, *Tigre*, *Reale*, *Eros*. They are interesting, alive, bitter, somewhat unhealthy, smelling of the 'seventies and of the Paris of the Goncourts, and, in some curious way, abortive. The man had not found himself. He was in his wrong element, fooling himself and being fooled by show, in a true Italian fashion.

Then, towards the age of forty, came the recoil, and the *Cavalleria Rusticana* volume is the first book of the recoil. It was a recoil away from the *beau monde* and 'the Continent', back to Sicily, to Catania, to the peasants.

So that *Cavalleria Rusticana* marks a turning-point in the man's life. Verga still looks back to the city elegance, and makes such a sour face over it, it is really funny. The sketch he calls *Fantasticheria* (Caprice) and the last story in the book, *Il Come, il Quando, et il Perché* (The How, When, and Wherefore) both deal with the elegant little lady herself. The sketch *Caprice* we may take as autobiographical — the story not entirely so. But we have enough data to go on.

So Verga recoiled to the humble poor, as we see in his *Caprice* sketch. Like a southerner, what he did he did wholesale. Floods of savage and tragic pity he poured upon the humble fisherfolk of Aci-Trezza, whether they asked for it or not; — partly to spite the elegant little lady. And this particular flood spreads over the whole of his long novel concerning the fisherfolk of Aci-Trezza: *I Malavoglia*. It is a great novel, in spite of the pity: but always in spite of it.

But Verga's people are always people in the purest sense of the word. They are not intellectual, but then neither was Hector nor Ulysses intellectual. Verga, in his recoil, mistrusted everything that smelled of sophistication. He had a passion for the most naive, the most unsophisticated manifestation of human nature. He was not seeking the brute, the animal man, the so-called cave-man. Far from it. He knew already too well that the brute and the cave-man lie quite near under the skin of the ordinary successful man of the world. There you have the predatory cave-man of vulgar imagination, thinly hidden under expensive cloth.

It may be urged that Verga commits the Tolstoyan fallacy, of repudiating the educated world and exalting the peasant. But this is not the case. Verga is very much the gentleman,

exclusively so, to the end of his days. He did not dream of putting on a peasant's smock, or following the plough. What Tolstoy somewhat perversely worshipped in the peasants was poverty itself and humility, and what Tolstoy somewhat perversely hated was instinctive pride or spontaneous passion. Tolstoy has a perverse pleasure in making the late Vronsky abject and pitiable: because Tolstoy so meanly envied the healthy passionate male in the young Vronsky. Tolstoy cut off his own nose to spite his face. He envied the reckless passionate male with a carking envy, because he must have felt himself in some way wanting in comparison. So he exalts the peasant: not because the peasant may be a more natural and spontaneous creature than the city man or the guardsman, but just because the peasant is poverty-stricken and humble. This is malice, the envy of weakness and deformity.

But Verga by no means exalts the peasants as a class: nor does he believe in their poverty and humility. Verga's peasants are certainly not Christ-like, whatever else they are. They are most normally ugly and low, the bulk of them. And individuals are sensitive and simple.

Verga turns to the peasants only to seek for a certain something which, as a healthy artist, he worshipped. Even Tolstoy, as a healthy artist, worshipped it the same. It was only as a moralist and a personal being that Tolstoy was perverse. As a true artist, he worshipped, as Verga did, every manifestation of pure, spontaneous, passionate life, life kindled to vividness.

Everybody knows, of course, that Verga made a dramatized version of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and that this dramatized version is the libretto of the ever-popular little opera of the same name. So that Mascagni's rather feeble music has gone to immortalize a man like Verga, whose only *popular* claim to fame is that he wrote the aforesaid libretto. — But that is fame's fault, not Verga's. [1928]

ARABIA DESERTA

Notes by
NORMAN DOUGLAS

'. . . Doughty sees clearly and feels deeply and warily chooses his words. There is a morning freshness in that gift of investing the ordinary phenomena of life with an extraordinary interest — a kind of bloom I should call it . . .

'. . . Open *Arabia Deserta* where you please, and you find yourself stumbling among thought-laden periods that might have been hacked out of Chaos by some demoniac craftsman in the youth of the world . . . The theme, by subtle alchemy, justifies the style. Those harsh principles of language — so it seemed to me — were wonderously adapted to mirror the crudeness of Arabian landscape and character . . . A spirit of sombre truthfulness broods over the scene . . .

'. . . Ideas such as these will have flitted through the minds of all the early admirers of Doughty. They must have realized that his volumes do provoke thought in no common degree. Here is not only information; here is character, a human document. The image of the poet traveller is no blur. Doughty has etched his lonely figure against this desolation of sand and lava-crag, and we are glad to see how the thing has been accomplished; it does one good to be in contact with a companion full of natural resources and listen to his tale; one leaves him with regret, as one bids farewell to some friend of robust and well-stored mind, perceiving that, all unconsciously, his words have been of use in revealing us to ourselves . . .

[From *Experiments*] [1925]

Charles M. Doughty.

1921

from *TRAVELS IN ARABIA DESERTA*
by Charles M. Doughty

NAPOLEON AND TALLEYRAND

By

HILAIRE BELLOC

History is formed and deflected by individuals in a far higher degree than has been admitted in the immediate past.

Of such individuals the two upon which modern history should most concentrate are Napoleon and Talleyrand. The most important will and intelligence in the formation of modern Europe were those of Napoleon, the most important will and intelligence affecting Napoleon were those of Talleyrand, both as the adviser of the Emperor and as his destroyer.

Jacques Bainville's *Napoleon* which achieved so immediate and great a success in France from its first appearance in the *Revue Universelle* is a model of the way in which history should be written: a clear thesis, of which a man fully read in his subject has become convinced, is presented for the better understanding of this subject; not for showing off before other learned men, nor for preparing mechanically an examination on facts and dates, but for answering the two great questions which dominate historical work — 'How?' and 'Why?'. It is written as a book, not as a compendium. It is unburdened by the pedantic interruption of references. It is logical and lucid in statement, continuous in sequence, united as a work of art should be, and its view is constantly supported not by partial and ill-balanced examples but by illuminating allusions suited to the proportions of the whole.

In historical work of this excellent kind the thesis may be opposed, as I should indeed myself oppose some part of Bainville's thesis; but the method can only be praised, and men — educated men at least — read a book for its subject and method and not because they will agree with it.

The main points in the wide survey which Monsieur Bainville makes of Napoleon's motives, dangers and environment are, (1) that the ultimate ruin of the Napoleonic attempt at European unity was due to the sea power of England: (2) that the annexation of Belgium by the French revolutionary Parliament was the source of the unrelenting war waged against the revolution by the aristocracies and the kings: (3) that Napoleon was always seeking peace and attempting to impose it by victory because the French people upon whom his power was founded were increasingly determined upon repose and the gathering of the fruits of their political effort: (4) that the invasion of Spain and the usurpation there were the great blunder which began Napoleon's difficulties: (5) that Napoleon himself was essentially not only a great Captain (which we all know) but a man moved by the very spirit which makes great men of Letters; indeed, a poet.

Of these five main points, the first may be questioned. The sea power of England could not have defeated Napoleon had he not ruined himself by his misjudgment when he invaded Russia, or at any rate when he decided to advance in 1812 after Smolensk: to have wintered there and then declared the liberation of Poland might have achieved all that he desired.

International commerce and banking in those days was not so far developed as to make the English power of blockade or English trade and finance the determining factor. Each was a very great factor indeed, but had Napoleon established universal peace on the Continent in the ninth year of his empire, though England could not have been compelled to

enter the European scheme, a compromise with it would have been necessary.

The other main theses of the book are very true. The annexation of Belgium which seemed to the revolutionaries a matter of natural right, was to the established governments of Europe an unpardonable and unnatural wrong. There was a feeling that if such things were condoned nothing in international morals was safe. This feeling never really disappeared. It lent vigour to the rush upon Napoleon which after the failure of Bautzen produced Leipzig, and, after that, the collapse of 1814. It is true also that all those battles were fought on the French side with the object of obtaining peace; peace, that is, upon the basis of recognizing the new frontiers which France had acquired. It is true that the crime committed against Spain (for it was no less) was a blunder due to complete miscalculation of the Spanish temper and that the chief evil of that blunder was the cutting of the grand army into two. And it is especially true that Napoleon was very much more than a soldier and, in particular, a master of words, visions and ideas.

Mr. Duff Cooper is better suited to making a conclusive study of Talleyrand than any English writer of our time. It is not only his reading which gives him this particular position; it is, in addition to his reading, his interest in the matter upon which the whole of Talleyrand's place in history depends: statecraft in diplomacy. Further, the author's sympathies are not only traditionalist but directly hostile to the effort at equality, and in tune with just such a contempt for the Revolutionary enthusiasm as Talleyrand held.

It may be debated whether in writing of an outstanding character in history one must be in sympathy with it to write truly. I incline to the judgment that an active and interested hatred of a man is at least as good a creative force as any for the setting down of his portrait. But sympathy with the

character of Talleyrand, or, at any rate, sympathy with his intelligence and will, if not with his morals, is of special value in this case because those in whom Talleyrand's lack of vision and contempt for enthusiasm arouse indignation grow blind to the real man. You are dealing in the case of Talleyrand with subtle action, the quality of which depends on precision. To coarsen his motives or to simplify them, is to miss him altogether. The truth of this can be seen in practice by the fact that nearly all those who have, in writing of him, expressed their indignation, have failed to explain the magnitude of his effect or even to understand the unity which underlay his contradictions. Most writers upon the Napoleonic era (for instance, Merezhkovsky) have been content to make him a villain of the piece. Those who approve the effects of his action in the first phase, disapprove of it in the second; but for the understanding of the man himself for giving unity to what was done before and after 1814 there has been hardly any sufficiently comprehensive view taken. In this book we have it.

I venture the criticism that I find in such a portrait insufficient blame, or, if the thing be only considered aesthetically, insufficient insistence upon Talleyrand's chief aesthetic defect — which was the lack of vision. It is true that if he had enjoyed or suffered vision he could not have exercised his supreme talents as he did. The contrast between himself and the great Captain whom he both served and ruined, lies chiefly in this; that in the one vision was exaggerated, in the other, absent. Vision, that which creates in one man an enthusiasm for adventure, in another for music, in another for glory, will lead to disproportion and consequent folly; but it is directly creative and is a necessary part of the heroic. Napoleon without it would not have been Napoleon; but Talleyrand with it would not have grasped as he did grasp completely and exactly the characteristics and the

moods at work around him in France and throughout Europe.

In the disputed matters which will never be settled, because direct evidence upon them can presumably never appear, matters such as Talleyrand's responsibility for the murder of Enghien and for the entry into Spain, Mr. Cooper decides, as he must, in his favour. Indeed against the Spanish accusation there is the whole tone of Talleyrand's restraining advice in other matters, and one may question whether in the matter of Enghien his foresight would not have been sufficient to make him doubt.

I would speak, had I the space, upon the qualities this book has of lucidity and of that best virtue in such work, economy. It is this combination which makes men return to a book they have read. It is this more even than its learning and right proportion that will, I think, give the book permanence.

[1932]

EVERYTHING REAL

By
HERBERT READ

Nearly seven years ago one or two discerning critics noticed a book that came very silently into the world. It was a pretty book to look at, with a woodcut by John Nash for its frontispiece; but though it was fiction, it was of a length that libraries scorn (less than two hundred pages), and so it made no stir. But the voice was an individual one, and the book, which was called *The House in the Country*, had atmosphere and charm, and the few who read it have waited patiently for the same voice, the same charm. It reappears in *An Unexpected Guest*, the same voice, but now stronger, more sustained, as gay and irresponsible as before, but now with an undertone of tragedy.

Bernadette Murphy is Irish, her characters are Irish, and her style is Irish. It is sometimes said that Sterne, whose style is the most fluent and the most inimitable of all English prose styles, owed his particular gift to the fact of his Irish birth, and a suspicion of Irish blood. Certainly there is something in the Irish character which runs fluently when it seeks to express itself; we call it 'blarney' when we get tired of it, but when it is alternatively soft with pathos, and bright with humour and intelligence, then it is irresistible. There is no conversationalist in the whole world that can rival an intelligent Irishman. Since fiction is the art of telling a story, the Irishman has only to talk in print to make himself a master

of the art. Miss Murphy writes as she talks, and since she is Irish . . . she is to be envied by all tongue-tied scribblers.

All writers of poetry and fiction tend to revert to the form and colour of their earliest impressions, for they are the most vital and the most vivid. If it were merely a question of the impressions of external things, of earth and sky and river and field, the result would be no more than lyrical — often is no more. But the child is vividly aware of deeper things, of feelings and emotions, and of all the strange complexity of human relationships; not in a rational, comprehending way, but with a passive, intuitive apprehension. The mind is sensitive, freshly exposed to the light of experience, storing a photographic record for future examination. We are all aware of these records (if we have had experiences to record), but the poet and the story-teller unrolls the film, develops it to a mature intensity, and thus gives us that intuitive vision of life which we call truth. It is not quite the same as realism, or naturalism, or any cold objective record of experience, such as the man who does not remember his childhood would make. It is in a certain sense unreal. It is, as the child in this book says, 'the feeling of being alive in a fairy-tale; the feeling of knowing that Fairyland was everything real, with this extra feeling . . . everything real, felt from inside. Nothing could frighten you any more if you remembered. Nothing could be lost, taken away, if you remembered. If only you could remember the feeling, you could be anywhere — and safe'.

I shall not relate the plot of this story, *An Unexpected Guest*, which is simple and tragic and universal. It is the method that matters. The sense of time is shattered. Human emotions exist in an absolute world. They are not ushered in with the pomp and circumstance of 'literature'; a voice is speaking, and before it has stopped, before we have dared to interrupt it, we know everything, everything real. It was

conveyed in the tone and the turn of the conversation, but in the end we wonder if there was something else too; for what seemed so casual as we listened, now takes on a pattern. How neatly it was all contrived, so that every piece should fit into the interlaced design!

[1934]

CHARITY

By
W. H. Davies

Things that are dear to me at home,
  Need all my help, and more;
And many a kindly thought I kill,
  For the stranger at my door;
Yet every generous impulse slain,
  Is a ghost that haunts me still.

It's better that a woman had
  A love-child at her breast,
Than live a heartless, selfish maid;
  It's better that a man should trust
A worthless knave, than never have
  His love or innocence betrayed.

[1929]

'REVOLT IN THE DESERT' AND ITS AUTHOR

By
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

In the war of 1914-18, all those of the belligerent Powers which were holding alien peoples in subjection, for their own good or otherwise, had to face the risk of such peoples seeing in the war their opportunity to rise and strike for independence. The Germans banked on a rising in Ireland. What is more to the present point, they considered the possibility of a nationalist rising in Algeria against the French. If they could have brought that about, the consequences might have been serious. But the steps they took to provoke it were futile, ending in a merely literary propaganda which was easily and effectively countered, not from France but from England: I, myself, being concerned in the affair in a comic opera manner as a reputed Prophet. Nevertheless the thing could have been done had there been a man of genius on the German side to do it.

The proof of this is that England, having a man of genius at her disposal, succeeded in effecting the parallel operation of stirring up a nationalist rebellion against the Turkish Empire in Arabia. The genius in question was a young archaeologist

with a careless fancy for calling himself by any name that came into his head at the moment. His mission caught him when he was T. E. Lawrence, and immortalized him under that name in spite of all his subsequent efforts to discard it, which included, by the way, an avatar as Shaw. As this caused him to be taken for my son one day by a clergyman at the house of Thomas Hardy, I had better, perhaps, explain that we are two different people, not related in the way of vulgar consanguinity.

Lawrence, like the Prophet of the Latter Day Saints, had a passion for digging up old civilizations, to gratify which he had to go to the East, where such excavations are not obstructed by precarious and extremely uninteresting new civilizations. He picked up some Arabic, and found out the sort of people the Arabs are. Knowing already only too well the sort of people we are, he saw that if he came to our rescue by making the Arabs revolt during the war he would have more trouble with us than with them; for British public opinion and official routine disapproves intensely of geniuses, even when they have been hallmarked at Oxford. As to the British army, its feelings when, after being compelled in some unaccountable manner to make Lawrence a Colonel rather than be ordered about by a nobody, it found him leading his hosts to battle on camel-back in a picturesque Arab costume, can be more easily imagined in messrooms than described by me. Even the camel did not get its regulation meals.

It is said that in 1918 Marshal Foch was asked how Napoleon would have fought the Great War. 'Superbly,' said the Marshal, 'but what the devil should we have done with him afterwards?' The Prince of Damascus solved the problem for Britannia. He simply walked away and became a nobody again under another name. Any country with a Valhalla or a spark of gratitude would have rewarded him with a munificent pension and built him another Blenheim. The British

'T. E. LAWRENCE'

from a drawing by Augustus John
reproduced in *'T. E. LAWRENCE': IN ARABIA AND AFTER*
by Liddell Hart

Government left him to pension himself like any ex-minister by writing a book about it all and living on the proceeds.

Now it happened that Lawrence's genius included literary genius; and that his maddeningly intense conscientiousness obliged him to write the book in order that the truth might be disentangled from the legends and lies, and history enjoy another of her rare escapes from romance and partisan scurrility. But he had inexorably determined that he would not coin the blood of the Arabs or his own into drachmas. He wrote the history, and, when it got lost, stolen or strayed, re-wrote it as Carlyle re-wrote his *French Revolution* when the housemaid lit the fire with it. It was a prodigious task; and the result was a masterpiece of literature. Commercially it was worth to the author a very large sum, a big advance on which was ready on the nail from eager publishers.

Lawrence made up his mind to lose money by it. He set able painters to work to make portraits of his Arab comrades-in-arms, and imaginative draughtsmen to let their fancy play on illustrations in black and white. He had the portraits reproduced in colour. He had paper specially made, and directed the printing himself in the manner of Morris or Caxton. Finally he produced a private subscription edition of one hundred copies after bringing the cost per copy up to ninety pounds or so, the subscription price being thirty. It was scarcely out when advertisements appeared in *The Times* offering £5 a week for the loan of a copy.

If you ask me, as you well may, how all these extravagances were financed, I can point only to the subscription, and to a mortgage on the popular abridgment of the book which is to be issued by the firm of Jonathan Cape, and which will presently take its place among our treasures of military chronicle, travel, confession, and ethnology. An Oxford grant which Lawrence refused to exploit for his private ends, and some remnants of his own property, were sunk in the enterprise.

As to Arabian booty, it seems to have consisted in a presentation camel which he shot under himself in the excitement of battle.

How, then, did he live whilst all this expedition was going on? Well, how does a nobody live when he has made himself totally unintelligible to commercial civilization? The Government was not wholly ungrateful; but it did not understand. It offered him all sorts of jobs that he did not want. Military commands in time of peace did not appeal to a man who had for years played skittles with army routine as masterfully as he had blown up the Turkish army of occupation on its railway trips through the desert. Civilian bureaucracy was even more hopeless. What more could a Government offer? Money enough to follow his star does not seem to have suggested itself to the departmental mind. In the Middle Ages Lawrence would have gone into a monastery as a retired *condottiero*. Living as he was, and is, in the Dark Ages, he deliberately chose the lot of a common soldier. It was objected that this was not fair, as he would be a most embarrassingly uncommon soldier, and that Private Lawrence would make the army ridiculous. He promptly took another name, and wore down the War Office as he had worn down Headquarters in Egypt. As a private soldier living humbly with his comrades (though I must confess that when they invited me to tea he looked very like Colonel Lawrence with several *aides-de-camp*) he finished the great book, and directed its manufacture even to ordering a different binding for every copy, so that there might be no 'first edition' in the collector's sense. He then transferred his patronage from the regular army, changing into the Air Force, and becoming Aircraftman XXXX, still refusing any position in which he would have to give an order, and still making me wonder whether he ever did anything else. At all events, having made up his mind to run away to India from the book and

its inevitable rekindling of the Lawrence limelight, he ordered his regiment (or whatever they call a regiment in the Air Force) thither, and is now out of reach, which is perhaps lucky for me as I am able to say all these things behind his back.

What will happen in India next, Heaven only knows.

[1927]

THE CROCKMAN

A Sketch by
MARY WEBB

The Crockman journeys along quiet lanes and hill-tracks, and, as a rule, the small market town in the centre of a lonely district is the largest place he ever sees. As his name implies, he sells china — or, rather, rough earthenware, deep red, partly glazed milk-bowls, yellow butter-crocks, blue and white barrel milk jugs and 'semi-porcelain' cups and saucers such as are used in farmhouses and cottages.

He sells salt, too, which is always in demand. A bar of salt, in addition to the huge basket of groceries, is too much even for the strong arms of 'mother', as she starts courageously home on market day, coming first by carrier's cart, which sets her down a mile or so from home. So she is glad to have the salt brought to her door.

A strong float, like a coster's cart, is the Crockman's vehicle. It is drawn by an old pony bought for a song, or by a hill pony broken-in at home. The float looks gay careering along bleak hillsides, down misty valleys, and drawing up with a flourish before the open door of the farm. There is a subdued clashing of ware. If it is sunny, the daffodil-tinted bowls and terra-cotta buttermints glow like jewels. The salt sparkles. Willow-pattern dishes shine cleanly. Out comes 'the Missus'. She buys a bar of salt, six pitcher eggs, and a large pot-bellied beer-jug with red flowers painted on it, because 'the Maister's' jug was broken last harvest. The

bargaining over, the Crockman has a mug of ale, or, if there is 'prosperation' on the farm, a sit-down knife-and-fork tea, with bacon and potatoes.

On market day in his metropolis the Crockman renews his stores, spreads his wares on straw in the market, generally in the open air, and from the rostrum of an orange-box proceeds to sell them.

When his great voice goes roaring down the busy aisles a crowd gathers — lads with straws in their mouths, old ladies in white aprons and vast brooches of polished stone, girls with butter baskets, shepherds whose calm will probably be undisturbed by Judgment Day, children with gingerbread in their mouths and on their persons.

The Crockman holds up a large willow-pattern dish.

'Tuppence.'

'Fi'pence.'

'Ladies and gents, this is 'eartbreaking! The biggest dish ever I sold! You can put half a sheep on it if you've a mind. Ladies, *if* you please!'

'A tanner.'

'Ten three fardens.'

'Now, now, people all, you're laughing at poor Jack. Ten-three for a dish worth five shilling?'

'A bob.'

The bidding stops.

'The Ten Commandments,' said the Crockman, 'you may forget, and welcome. But meanness I cannot abide. A bob for my beautiful dish? People, I'd sooner *break* it!'

And holding it high above his head, he sends it crashing on to the pavement.

Who is to know, unless the Crockman tells the secret, that the dish was 'flawed seconds' and only intended for this dramatic moment?

[1924]

SINCLAIR LEWIS IN A NEW PHASE

By
GEORGE SLOCOMBE

The love of self-analysis is one of the most curious and perhaps one of the most admirable phenomena of modern America. It is in part responsible for the immense vogue which the works of Mr. Sinclair Lewis have enjoyed in his own country. It enables an essentially romantic writer like himself to write such savage satires on modern American civilization as *Babbitt* and *Arrowsmith*, and yet so cunningly to compose his picture that his fellow-countrymen unhesitatingly and admiringly accept his characters as national types. It is no mean tribute to the genius of Sinclair Lewis that his generalizations, even when they are but the exasperated comments of a mind naturally sanguine, have passed into the current philosophy of Americans.

The entire American scene, with possibly the single exception of the Western States, which have so far escaped the critical eye and caustic humour of Mr. Lewis, has been coloured by reflections from his candid if occasionally distorting mirror, and has even, in several instances, consciously adapted itself to the conceptions of its caricaturist. So far as Europe is concerned, it is no exaggeration to say that the America of the Middle West is largely his creation.

And now Mr. Lewis enters upon a new phase. Hitherto he has been chiefly preoccupied with the small town, and the

impact upon the small town and its citizens of the growing self-consciousness and material progress of America. He has described successively the small town doctor, the business man, the struggle of men possessed with a pure passion for science to escape from the stranglehold of big business, publicity and organized philanthropy, and the adventures of a woman unequally urged by sex hunger and the modern passion for social reform. In one novel, *Dodsworth*, he has explored some of the problems created for the average American business man by marriage. In his latest novel, *Work of Art*, he dumps sex overboard as a minor incident in the creative life of a modern American, and devotes himself, with the torrential energy and torrential enthusiasm characteristic of Mr. Lewis at his best, to the portrayal of an American happily creating a new industry.

Sinclair Lewis's new romantic is born not in the Middle West but in New England, at Black Thread Centre, Connecticut. He is unromantically named Myron Weagle. He and his brother Ora are the sons of a drunkard and a heroic uncomplaining drab, keepers of a depressing country hotel frequented chiefly by travelling salesmen. Ora has ambitions to be a poet. Myron, in the unprepossessing dawn of the hotel industry in America, has a ridiculous and inexplicable urge to create the perfect hotel. He is, of course, the real poet of the two brothers, and against his subsequent career of dish-washing and kitchen-slavery, of steady application to the mysterious science of hotel-keeping, until at last he emerges as the powerful but still frustrated director of a great sky-climbing caravanserai in New York, the feverish, vapid literary affectations of the artist-brother Ora seem futile and commonplace.

But in this novel the truth of the characters is relatively unimportant. The aim of the author is clearly to write the life story of a comparatively new and essentially American

industry. He has wisely avoided the temptation to write an epic. Even in his most romantic journeys of investigation into the origins, history and developments of an aspect of modern America which is in many respects a microcosmic vision of the whole, he is restrained by his cold and fanatical scruple for accurate observation. His very weakness for humorous exaggeration and reckless cataloguing is somehow turned to satirical account. Note the undercurrent of satire that accompanies one of the gayest of his inventories. Big, red-faced, check-suited Hector Warlock, the dean and dandy of travelling salesmen, is talking to the youthful, vaguely aspiring Myron:

> Nobody, hardly ever, learned hotel-keeping right down to the ground unless he was born under the kitchen sink and did his teething on a file of overdue bills... An hotel-manager has to be a combination of a haus-frau, a chef, a bar-room bouncer, a doctor for emergencies, a wet nurse, a lawyer that knows more about the rights and wrongs of guests than Old Man Supreme Court himself, an upholsterer, a walking directory that knows right off-hand, without looking it up, just where the Hardshell Baptist Church is and what time the marriage licence bureau opens and what time the local starts for Hick Junction. He's got to be a certified public accountant, a professor of languages, a quick-action laundryman, a plumber, a heating-engineer, a carpenter, a swell speechmaker, an authority on the importance of every tinhorn State Senator or one-night-stand lecturer that blows in and expects to have the red carpet already hauled out for him, a fly-cop that can tell from looking at a girl's ears whether she's sure enough married to the guy or not, a moneylender — only he doesn't get any interest or have any security. . . .

All this was, of course, at the beginning of this century, but even then there were some American hotel-men with a vision

of the future. But the time had not yet come when the tremendous discovery would be made in American hoteldom that the guest was always right, although the industrious and far-sighted Myron Weagle had already a dim apprehension of that profound truth. It is a discovery that has yet to be made in England, in so far, at least, as the majority of provincial and an unpleasantly large proportion of London hotels are concerned. And if the perfect inn of Myron's imagination is still unrealized in America, even in the fancy of his creator, it is farther still from realization in Europe, in spite of the amiable things Mr. Lewis says about hotels in Italy and his neatly drawn portrait of an engaging young Italian hotel director.

Mr. Lewis writes about inn comforts with passion, as is natural to an American in whose strenuous life hotels and inns bulk much more largely than in our own. We have not, in this country, yet learned that hotels can be lived in for a longer period than a week-end. For this, if for no other reason, the background he has chosen for *Work of Art* will seem to some readers slightly incongruous, however it may be to others strange and exciting. Personally I found this novel absorbing, and superior in execution to *Ann Vickers*, if more modest in design.

[1934]

DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

By
H. E. BATES

It has been said that in England the love of flowers takes the place of art. If that is true there is certainly no knowing who next will turn out to be an artist. The butterfly-collared old gentleman regarding *The Times* with dismal ferocity in the corner of the morning railway-carriage may, for all one knows, be thinking with the tenderest longing of some minute Himalayan primula; the navvy drilling out the bowels of Piccadilly, making the most diabolical racket in the world, may in imagination be gathering sweet-peas in his Pimlico back-garden; and that dim, mouse-like lady who nibbles her bun and butter in an A.B.C. may be a terrifying authority on the flora of the Andes. There is indeed no knowing at all who will turn out to be a gardener in England.

After Bernard Shaw I feel that perhaps Mr. Beverley Nichols is the last person I should have suspected of having gardening fever. One is inclined to think of Mr. Nichols as belonging to an artificial and sophisticated world in which the only flowers are hot-house orchids or imitation blooms of coloured glass. Indeed he might easily be the type of man who wouldn't know a cabbage from a primrose. Instead he turns out to be an artist. He exhibits suddenly the tenderest love for snowdrops and witch-hazel, daphnes and chionodoxa. He reveals himself as a grubber among weeds, the prey of nurserymen, a planter of woodlands, a fierce collector of rare

and rarer and ever rarer blossoms. He knows the miracles that may come from a packet of seed. He has been guilty of making a rock-garden with all its stones pointing to heaven. He cannot resist the smell of the soil and the fascination of bursting blossoms. In short he is a lost man. And he has written a book about it.

I am a lost man myself. I too have gardening fever. And one day I also may have the courage to write a book on myself as a gardener. For gardeners have one trait, at least, in common: they must tell the world of their achievements. If they do not write books about their loves and deeds they hold flower-shows. If they do not hold flower-shows they brag to one another. If I were to meet Mr. Nichols I might say 'Have you got *Soldanella Alpina*? I've just raised it from seed. I'll give you half a dozen. It's a bit difficult.' To which he might reply devastatingly: 'Thanks awfully, but it's a positive weed in my place. I can't keep it down. But I say — have you *Meconopsis Baileyi*? I could spare you a couple. It's a lovely thing'. And I should get my revenge: 'It's very nice of you, but I've just pricked out a couple of hundred'.

All this is part of the gardener's enthusiasm. It springs from his simplicity and joy, for true gardeners are simple, joyful people. There is nothing like the joy of beholding a flower raised by one's own hand from seed. And appropriately Mr. Nichols' book is full of joy. It quivers and bubbles and brims over with the love and delight of flowering things. It is as full of fun and wit as Mr. Nichols' own daphnes are full of fragrance. In it one meets also not only flowers but people — principally those tiresome people who, for obscure reasons, persist in growing delphiniums twenty feet high, japanese lilies as easily as kidney beans, gentians that bloom like pansies. Mr. Nichols has met them and suffered. The boastful old lady who grows all those rarities he himself longs to grow but cannot, the simpering young thing who

poses and blinks and blushes all over his flower-beds, the philistines who refer to his treasures as that stuff and those things — they are all here, drawn so wittily that the book will delight not only gardeners but even those who do not know a tulip from a rose.

I ought to add a word about the book itself. Mr. Rex Whistler's decorations give it the gay, rather eighteenth-century air of a neat spring flower-bed.

[1932]

HUNTING JOY

By

W. H. Davies

How sad a face this Knowledge wears!
  How strange is Truth, which none can doubt!
How easy is an Eden made,
  How hard to keep the Serpent out!
How easy to create a Joy,
  How hard to hold it safe and fast;
Since half the world would hunt it down,
  As Fame, or Love, can prove at last.
I'll make my Joy a secret thing,
  My face shall wear a mask of care;
And those who hunt a Joy to death,
  Shall never know what sport is there!

[1929]

GERTRUDE JEKYLL

from a portrait by William Nicholson, painted in 1920
reproduced in *GERTRUDE JEKYLL: A MEMOIR*
by Francis Jekyll

EUGENE O'NEILL

By
ST. JOHN ERVINE

I

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born in New York on October 16th, 1888. His name clearly indicates both the race from which he sprang and the politics of his family at the date of his birth. 'O'Neill', by itself, might as easily be worn by an Orangeman as by a Sinn Feiner — many O'Neill's have been high in the counsels of the Ulster Unionists — but when it is preceded by the name of 'Gladstone', there can be little doubt that its wearer had a pre-Sinn Fein Nationalist for a father, who carried his affectionate respect for the first author of a Home Rule Bill to his son's baptismal font. James O'Neill was born in Ireland, but emigrated to America, where he became a popular actor and theatrical manager. His wife, although born in America, had Irish parents. Their son, therefore, may fairly claim that the Irish part of him predominates over the American, although I doubt whether he takes any interest in Ireland where, so far as I know, he has never set his feet. There is nothing in his work to indicate that he cares a brass farthing about an island which has subsisted too long on the charity of the world, and must now, heaven be praised, subsist on its own labours for the rest of time. Whatever his political opinions may be, he has very properly kept them out of his plays, although he has not been reticent about himself in any other respect. Nothing is so obvious in his work as this, that he has wrought it out of his

own experience even more than he has wrought it out of his imagination, and that the experience has on the whole been hard and bitter.

It is said, on what authority I do not know, that a rolling stone gathers no moss. Mr. O'Neill is a living refutation of the statement. There can be few men alive who have rolled so far and so often and gathered so much moss in so short a time as he has done. After passing through various preparatory schools, mostly Roman Catholic, Mr. O'Neill, at the age of seventeen, entered Princeton University, which was then under the presidency of Mr. Woodrow Wilson. He remained at Princeton for one year, when according to legend (which has been very busy with him) he was sequestrated for good.

After leaving the University, he became secretary of a mail-order firm in New York, but, finding this form of employment unattractive, he went off on a gold-prospecting expedition to Spanish Honduras where he got a fever, but no gold. He then became assistant manager of a theatrical touring company in the United States, but probably found it as unprofitable as gold-mining, for he made a complete break with land enterprises and got a job as a seaman on a Norwegian barque which took sixty-five days to sail from Boston to Buenos Aires. Legend asserts that he was 'shanghaied' in South America, but authority provides no confirmation of it. He left the Norwegian barque and spent eighteen months in the Argentine, where he followed a variety of employments, ranging from the draughting department of the Westinghouse Electric Company and the wool house of the Swift Packing Company to the more domestic affairs of the Singer Sewing Machine Company; and then he returned to the sea for his second voyage as an ordinary seaman on a British steamer plying between Buenos Aires and Durban. His third voyage, in a British steamer, was from Buenos Aires to New York, where he secured a job as a seaman on an

American liner running from New York to Southampton. After this he made another change of profession, and became an actor in his father's company, touring through the Far Western states. He did not remain on the stage for long. His next job was that of a general newspaper hack on a small-town journal in Connecticut, followed by a stay of six months in a sanatorium for consumptives, at the end of which time he decided to become a dramatist, the career which is now certain to be his for the remainder of his life.

He had done all this various work before the age of twenty-four, and had, one would have thought, acquired enough knowledge of mankind to enable him to write plays without further instruction; but that pathetic faith which all Americans have in the power of professors to make an author of a man after twenty lessons in the craft of letters, caused him to spend a year at Harvard in taking the Drama Course. He had not yet realized what he was soon to realize, that every dramatist of quality makes his own technique. Whatever he learned during his year at Harvard he took pains to discard. If he knows anything of the rules of dramatic construction, as laid down by all the authorities from Aristotle to Mr. William Archer and Professor G. P. Baker, he has carefully concealed his knowledge and written his plays as if he had none. One of his long plays, *Beyond the Horizon*, occupies six acts when three would do. Another play, *Diff'rent*, has a beginning and an end, but no middle. A third play, *The Emperor Jones*, is practically a monologue in eight scenes. Aristotle would turn in his grave if he could hear of Mr. O'Neill's tricks with technique, but he might be induced to pardon them by the fact that they are extraordinarily successful. Mr. O'Neill seems, in each new play that he produces, to be making a fresh experiment; and the singular thing is that each experiment justifies itself. The construction of *Diff'rent* has no resemblance to that of *Beyond the Horizon*,

nor has the construction of either of them any resemblance to that of *The Emperor Jones*; but in each case it seems exactly suited to Mr. O'Neill's purpose. His plays, in short, are new adventures. Mr. O'Neill is still at his old game of rolling round the world in search of fresh experiences.

2

He has not escaped from the influence of Mr. Bernard Shaw — which among the younger dramatists has? — and the character of the Cockney sailor, Cocky, is obviously derived from that of Felix Drinkwater in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. The hectic brilliance of the London guttersnipe's talk, whether derived from Mr. Shaw's Drinkwater or from a Cockney sailor on that British steamer which plyed between Buenos Aires and Durban, is faithfully reproduced. We get the man's excitability, his lack of human kindliness, his frights, his love of sensation, his garrulity, his emotional crises, his frequent tears and overwrought laughter and low cunning and mean cleverness all truly set out. The creature lives and moves and has his being.

The faults of the plays are obvious. Most of them are character-studies rather than pieces of drama, and they may be regarded as the rough notes made by Mr. O'Neill for the bigger plays he is now writing. But they are astonishingly good rough notes. He is, perhaps, too eager to jot down the exact words used by his people, and he scatters his 'bloodies' and 'blasts' and 'bleedin's' and 'hells' and 'damns' excessively over his dialogue. 'Bloody' sounds less terrible in the ears of an American than it sounds in the ears of an Englishman, despite the fact that it is quite frequently heard on the English stage since Mr. Lennox Robinson, followed by Mr. Bernard Shaw, made it popular there; but we have not yet

become reconciled to continuous streams of gutter language, and Mr. O'Neill's fidelity to fact will probably prevent his plays from being acted as often as they ought to be in this country. That, however, is a minor flaw and remediable. It is natural for a young man to imagine that fidelity to fact is more important than fidelity to imagination. We all begin by making our characters curse and swear, even if we do not make them do anything else. I once wrote a play in which the principal character seldom said anything but 'Hell's flames!' and 'Damn and blast you!' and I can still remember the awe with which I regarded myself when I finished it.

None of these faults are fundamental. They are the signs of a lively and original mind which has not yet mastered its material, but is in process of doing so; and Mr. O'Neill's later work fully justifies the hope his countrymen have that he will be the first great American dramatist. Perhaps the most notable characteristics of his work are, first, the sea-air in it, and, second, the complete absence of theatricality in his method. One might expect that the son of an actor who had himself been an actor would manifest some signs of his theatrical upbringing in his writing; but no one, reading any of Mr. O'Neill's plays, would ever suspect him of theatrical parentage or training. He might never have been inside a theatre, so little mark is there in his work of acquaintance with stage-tradition and stage-technique. It is impossible for a skilled reader not to know from Sir Arthur Pinero's plays, that the English dramatist brings an actor's training to the creation of them; but Mr. O'Neill's theatrical career seems to have left no impression on his mind, none in comparison with the impression made by his seamanship. His work is as fluid as the sea and as consistent. The tides return with terrible regularity, although they seem uncontrolled and wasted; and something of that strength is in these plays. Mr. O'Neill, like all men, Mr. Conrad, for example, who are

truly acquainted with the sea, does not sentimentalize about it. It may call him as it calls many, but he has no pretty illusions about it. The sea is beautiful and horrible, kind and cruel; it strengthens and it destroys; it binds and it separates and is utterly implacable.

3

Mr. O'Neill's home is now in Provincetown, a lonely-ish place on the coast of Massachusetts, from which he descends once or twice a year on New York with the manuscript of a new play. He has, perhaps, been writing too rapidly in the last ten years, but each play that he takes to town with him shows that his mind retains its freshness. Everything that he writes, though it be written with realistic intention, is suffused by poetic feeling. He has caught cadences from Synge in some of his plays, but these are faint echoes that do not irritate the mind by the memories they evoke. Finally and surely, Mr. O'Neill's master is Mr. O'Neill. He takes what he needs from his elders, as all of us ought to do, but he does not fail to satisfy his chief needs from his own resources. He is immeasurably the most interesting man of letters that America has produced since the death of Walt Whitman.

[1923]

THE ARTHUR RANSOME CLUB

By
MARY AGNES HAMILTON

All over Britain, all over the United States, there are boys and girls who know, now, what they want for their Christmas present when next Christmas comes. They want a new Arthur Ransome book; and nothing else will satisfy them. And — remarkable phenomenon this: well-nigh unique — the friends and parents who desire to please them are, by that same act, pleasing themselves. They mean to get the new book in good time, so that they may enjoy it themselves, beforehand. I am one of the friends. Five times, now, I have found that, however many copies I bought to send away, I had to buy one more to keep for myself; and even so, it is hard to hold it on the shelf; at any moment there is apt to be a gap in my nice green row of five, since one is out on loan.

The thought of this Club — for such, in spirit and in enjoyment, it is — seems to me one of the most exhilarating possible. To be president and founder, creator, inspirer and dispenser of joy to its far flung membership is fame; fame with none of the taints and the penalties usually attaching to that state. One visualizes the bright eyes and eager faces, and envies Mr. President, whom they love both for past pleasures and eagerly anticipated future ones, his own happy sense of possession of such a cornucopia. Out of it he has shaken already *Swallows and Amazons*, *Swallowdale*, *Peter Duck*, *Winter*

Holiday and *Coot Club*; he is going to shake out more. Honorary membership of this association belongs, by virtue of nothing more meritorious than delight, to many older people, who know that a new Arthur Ransome is a passport to escape from everything that frets and vexes, comes redolent of that odd special pleasure that belongs to sitting by the fire, after tea, when one has come in from a long walk in the country. The authentic glory of his Club, however, is not for those like me, who feel a warming sympathy for Mrs. Barrable and the Captain; it wreathes the heads of the gathering thousands who can see themselves in Titty or Tim, Dorothea or Dick, Nancy Blackett or Bill.

What is it that makes these books different? A child ought to answer that question. The praise of any grown-up must be suspect. There are plenty of books about children which grown-ups like; but for how few of them have children any use! Two supreme qualities distinguish Arthur Ransome's tales. The first is the power to set before the reader of any age children who really *are* children and not miniature grown-ups, and who at the same time, are as securely and solidly characterized as any grown-ups (as are real children). Nancy and Peggy Blackett, Susan and Titty, Port and Starboard, for instance, are perfectly distinct. Here, moreover, are three pairs of sisters who *are* sisters; who have, in each case, the underlying 'family' likeness that makes them recognizably related and, as against the rest of the world, joined, and yet, again in each case, are so surely individualized that they speak always in their own voices. How this is done one cannot say; but done it is. Moreover, these girls, all of them, are girls, and not boys. The boys, in their turn, are as vivid; Roger even is a person, as is John; so is Tom, in *Coot Club*: so is Bill, in *Peter Duck* (a very subtle study, this, on which the Marxian might well ponder), or Dick in *Winter Holiday*. The establishment of essential character and individuality is

accomplished by touches so sure and so delicate that one cannot pick up its traces: only recognize the achieved result. This secure substantiality of the people is partnered by an equally secure establishment of place, and a capacity to render an atmosphere, and what the Germans call 'Stimmung', which lends a shimmer of wholly unsentimentalized yet profoundly moving beauty to the whole. Again, it is an exercise as tantalizing as delightful to attempt to track down the touches by which this result is accomplished. There are chapters in which magic is so strong that one feels one can almost see the Enchanter's wand. Such is 'Titty Alone', in *Swallows and Amazons*, or Tom's sail, in *Coot Club*. Settle down on these chapters however; dissect and analyse: the mystery remains a mystery. The answer is the eye and hand of the artist — that is all. But there is here an enigmatic, inexhaustible, insoluble 'plus' which translates the whole action in the realm of faery: gives it the strange and elusive quality that belongs to a poem like *Kubla Khan*. One cannot put one's finger on it; but the sense of it suffuses the whole. In virtue of it, one risks the prediction that these books will last; that the Club has a long and glorious life before it.

WINNER TAKE NOTHING

By
WILLIAM PLOMER

Mr. Hemingway's new book of short stories begins with two men fighting. One of them produces a knife.

> He was choking me and hammering my head on the floor and I got the knife out and opened it up; and I cut the muscle right across his arm and he let go of me.

In another story a boy mutilates himself, at Christmas time, with a razor. In another a military doctor flings a saucerful of iodine into the eyes of a wounded officer. Attention is drawn to these episodes of violence, because episodes of violence are a particular choice of Mr. Hemingway, war veteran and connoisseur of bull-fighting, and may be taken as having a particular significance. 'Pourquoi alors', in the words of Edmond Jaloux, 'ne pas s'expliquer franchement sur le sadisme et ne pas vouloir accepter qu'il soit un des ferments les plus naturels de l'âme humaine?'

Mr. Hemingway writes as an artist, in many ways representative of his race and time, and one might regard him as cutting right across the muscle of the arm of Convention; one might read into the incident of the boy who mutilates himself at Christmas time, in a belief that sexual excitement is 'a sin against our Lord and Saviour', an indictment of Christianity; and one could wish for no clearer exposures of modern warfare. His writings belong, quite as much as the

writings of, say, D. H. Lawrence, to the literature of protest and escape. Although this book is destined to lie on tables of glass and steel in clean, empty, modern rooms, neither book nor table can be regarded as some pure, new, effortless fancy; the book, like that furniture and those rooms, is a protest against old conventions and an effort to escape from them, and at the same time an effort towards the establishment of a new convention. Sexual inversion, male and female; the War and its effects; the pleasant or unpleasant follies of various sorts of 'ordinary' people in this present century — these are some of Mr. Hemingway's preoccupations, some of the subjects he treats with that technical skill, that economy, and that peculiarly American kind of sophistication, which have helped to make his name. Irony plays over the surface, and is often intensified to a terrible directness, as in *A Natural History of the Dead*, whom 'one has seen in the hot weather with a half-pint of maggots working where their mouths have been'. That irony is often humorous, but here and there a phrase reveals that the legacy of puritanism is not yet spent: would it occur to any but a 'Western' man to write, even in fun, 'the position prescribed for procreation is indecorous, highly indecorous'? And sometimes Mr. Hemingway is content just to express disgust, taking up a touch-me-not attitude.

Combined with the motives of protest and escape, and lurking also beneath the manner — the fastidious brutality of this laconic wanderer — there is a genuine nihilism, like that of the waiter in *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* who says to himself, 'Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee' and 'Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name'. This is partly the nihilism of our time, the time of the War and of our permanent Crisis and of our spiritual dislocation, but it is also the nihilism that so often goes with vitality. Mr. Hemingway's vitality, which has led him into the waiting

rooms of Swiss railway stations and the Spanish bullring, to Milan or Kansas City, observing various sorts of people, the French exiles in Wyoming, the bull-fighter who was a 'queen', the sick child in bed, or 'the biggest whore I ever saw in my life' — this vitality quickens his eye and shapes his style. To me he is the most interesting contemporary American short-story writer. Vivid, adroit, and an expert in brevity, he can put more point into an anecdote than many writers can into a novel.

[1934]

THE TRAVELLERS' LIBRARY

By
GRAHAM GREENE

With the publication of *Thirty Tales* by H. E. Bates, *Green Hell* by Julian Duguid, and *But for the Grace of God* by J. W. N. Sullivan, the Travellers' Library reaches its two hundredth volume and a chance is given to estimate the publishers' achievement. That it is an unusual one, is obvious, I think, from the choice of these latest volumes, which happen to represent the three main divisions of the library — fiction, travel and reminiscence. Most publishers have an idiosyncrasy; some book, which has proved an unexpected best seller, leaves an indelible mark on their lists; an element of political propaganda maybe, a spirit of blithe or naughty picaresque, perhaps a touch of precociousness, of eighteenth-century pastiche. It is the complete absence of standardization which is the most marked characteristic of the Travellers' Library.

Take Mr. Bates for example. No writer to-day owes less to his contemporaries. His debt to Tchekoff is obvious, but the influence is a direct one, not by way of Katherine Mansfield, and he has naturalized Tchekoff in a way that Katherine Mansfield, perhaps because of her colonial birth and lack of a local root, was unable to do. To my mind Mr. Bates is a more conscious and a more controlled writer. His stories express a

mood by means of a severe limitation. His own emotions are not allowed to lap over the edge of his stories as Katherine Mansfield's so often did. This first selection of his tales adds distinction to a library which has made less compromise with popularity than any other series at the price (one remembers its predecessors, the volumes by Ambrose and Bierce, by Mr. Coppard and by Mr. Joyce). In the tone of its prose, in the sense of a poetic imagination working in a localized area, *Thirty Tales* takes its place beside *Dubliners*. And *Dubliners* contains surely the finest short story written in English since the death of James — I mean *The Dead*.

Green Hell won immediate popularity because of the contemporary interest in its subject, travel in South America. They are curios, these literary currents — to the South Seas in the 'nineties, to Africa a few years ago. Mr. Duguid is not a conscious stylist, as are some of his successors, Mr. Peter Fleming, Mr. Evelyn Waugh, Mr. Aldous Huxley, but he writes in good workaday prose which does not disgrace a library especially rich in travel books. I suspect that here we are close to the publisher's idiosyncrasy; there was a time when the name of Cape brought to mind whalers and southern seas and rather tiresome old men with beards recounting incredible exploits.

But one can forgive a good many southern seas and ancient mariners to a publisher who includes in a three and sixpenny library *The Travels of Marco Polo* and that superb book William Lithgow's *Rare Adventures and Painefull Peregrinations*. Published in 1632, when the boisterous Elizabethan prose was wearing thin, it represents the transition from Nash to Donne. The euphuisms are still there, but they adorn a shroud. 'My roome,' Lithgow wrote of his imprisonment by the Inquisition, 'was made a darke-drawn Dungeon, my belly the anatomy of mercilesse hunger, my comfortlesse hearing, the receptacle of sounding Bells.'

Last, but not least admirable, Mr. Sullivan's autobiography, a curious, complex, candid document, a self-exposure without a trace of self-pity. I read the book when it first appeared more than a year ago and the memory is still vivid. A series which includes in its section of reminiscences this lantern slide of bared nerves, the grace and quietude of George Bourne's *A Farmer's Life*, and the seventeenth-century *Military Memoirs* of Captain George Carleton, whose portrait of the professional soldier of the day is an invaluable complement to the fornicating blades of Aphra Behn, cannot be accused of standardization.

There are no limits to the possibilities of this most catholic of libraries, and the publisher must be inundated by suggestions. Lovers of travel books will dream of a day when Thicknesse will be represented here, while those who possess the short stories of Bierce in this series may long to be able to acquire Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat*, for years out of print in England. My personal wish is to see the method of Mr. Hamish Miles in his admirable *Selections from Byron* extended, a criticism and a biography by means of extracts from a writer's work. I dream, for example, of a Dryden arranged by Professor Grierson.

[1934]

QUEEN ELIZABETH

By
MONA WILSON

There is a peculiar difficulty in composing the biography of a great historic personage. With a writer or an artist we can refer to his works on which the biography is in a certain sense the comment. With a statesman or a sovereign the works and the life are so closely involved in each other that the personage may be swallowed up in the history, and the result will be not a Life but a Life and Times with rather more Times than Life.

There is a simple alternative with which our generation is distressingly familiar. Take a few standard books, assume a point of view, and then with much self-assurance and a little psycho-analysis dress up a figure which a film-going world will accept as plausible. A famous interpretation of Queen Elizabeth is largely based, as we all remember, on a dirty story told by one drunk Scotsman to another drunk Scotsman some years after she was dead. Every such performance, however brilliant, contributes something to the mischief of lowering the public standard of appreciation and even of enjoyment. In the long run the sound books are better reading than the film books, but will they in this crowded market find customers? Professor Neale's *Queen Elizabeth* is the work of an historian, patient, thoughtful and responsible. I do not feel quite sure that in his just contempt for gossip he does not sometimes go too far in the direction of flattening his psychology. He does

his best, but there is much in Elizabeth — particularly her peculiar type of mendacity — which only a woman can hope to understand. I think myself that the Queen's politic aversion from marriage was emotionally accentuated by her brief love affair with Seymour, and sustained by her lasting affection for Leicester, the one man with whom she was ever on terms of easy laughing companionship. And her relations with Mary Queen of Scots became more intelligible if we suppose that, while she was bound to disapprove of her and was often annoyed with her, at heart she rather liked her. Elizabeth was a very complete woman and the unhappiness of her last years came largely from her failure to discover the right man for her age. Leicester's death left her to grow old alone, and Essex, the son of her imagination, failed her in every capacity.

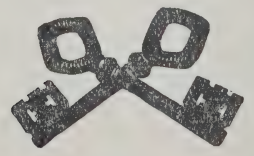
But this is no more than the tinting of the figure. Professor Neale's Elizabeth stands solid in time and space, a space which fills all Western Europe, and a time of such rapid and intricate movement that any simple view of it is impossible. The change from 1565 to 1595 is so great that the details must be followed thread by thread. Feudal loyalties have been broken up, the Church has been made an effective machine, the national finances are solid. Yet there had been a time when it seemed not out of the question that the Northern Counties might break away under their native lords, that between Papist and Puritan the establishment would perish in a second confiscation, more drastic than the spoliation of the monasteries, and that a bankrupt country would be compelled to seek peace and protection under the sceptre of Spain.

In this astonishing recovery, amounting almost to the creation of a new power in the world, what part was played by the Queen herself? Professor Neale does well to insist on her financial capacity; no one ever understood the virtues of a balanced budget better. In foreign affairs she had the great

advantage that she could not be frightened. Her incomprehension of the religious motive, though it left an ugly problem to her successors, probably served her well in her own day. But above all stands her genius, in part emotional, in part intellectual, for fostering and concentrating all the tendencies that made for unity and good government in a nation by tradition factious, turbulent and slapdash, which sudden wealth was making venal and corrupt. This is how her people saw her, and how the next age remembered her, and this is how she appears once more in Professor Neale's book.

In many ways she was an old-fashioned woman. To the end of her life, in the days of Bacon and Hooker, she was still writing the English of the 'forties. It may be doubted whether she ever understood either the new strategy or the new theology. She was her father's child, a renaissance lady with a Lutheran upbringing and a strong infusion of middle-class blood, and the mixture is revealed in the blend of magnificence and business capacity, subtlety of method and moderation of purpose with which she dazzled, perplexed and overawed her world. Every story told of her shows that in any walk of life she would have been a remarkable woman, but only an historian like Professor Neale can realize and convey how perfectly her superb efficiency fitted her for the part which fate had called on her to fill.

[1934]



PEADAR O'DONNELL: A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

By
GERAINT GOODWIN

No one reading Peadar O'Donnell can doubt that he is a very considerable artist. It is only the fear that the avalanche of books which descends on us — and quite a proportion dealing with his own country — might tend to obscure his real worth. But as to O'Donnell's books — there are six of them — there is no question at all. Those with an understanding heart will go to them time and again. Few better books than *Islanders* and *Adrigoole* can have come out of Ireland.

This is a bold claim, and the answer is the books. When Robert Lynd said that O'Donnell had brought a family to life in *Islanders*, he was saying what any reader of the book can endorse — not only to life, but to so exuberant a life that we have that inspiriting feeling of meeting, not character, not invention, but people so real that they almost embarrass us by their actual presence. That is a severe test to put upon a novelist. How many survive it?

O'Donnell's way to literature was not the usual one; you have only to read that grim book, *The Gates Flew Open*, to discover this. His problem opens up that wide and difficult

question as to whether the artist is anything but a contemplative. O'Donnell was not; he was before all and above all a man of action. He was indeed a member of the Irish Republican Army executive, and the fall of the Four Courts brought about his incarceration for two years. Up to that time he seems never to have thought of literature as either a means or an end. How then should a man whose first and last thought was his country — and his country in post-war Ireland was politics — enter this new field, not as a beginner, but as an artist triumphantly sure and complete?

The answer is not far to seek. One can understand how O'Donnell, if he had seen but a twentieth part of what he has written about, would be moved to that frenzy, that 'savage joy' of which O'Casey speaks. Perhaps his work is the flowering of that savage joy, the natural process of one who has felt so keenly, so bitterly, as to reach eventually that blessed state beyond feeling (that is, beyond conscious partisanship), that sense of compassion, not aloof, not abstract, but a passion tempered, or a feeling sublimated beyond the blood.

That is an explanation; but if we search his own work, that memorable book of his imprisonment, with its courage and its hideousness ('There were times when life was full of an ultimate sense of tears and dark moods that seeped blood'), we come upon this passage which is worth remembering:

> 'And then I suddenly became aware of life outside the range of the fever; waves breaking on the cliffs of Arranmore, the whirl of eddies around Innishfree; the hearty bustle of the flood tide. I got brine in my face from white horses and heard the curlews cry at night time. This sent me roving around the cells again with a new sense of adventure: all the talk was of the struggle: the Tan phase and since, and if now and then a tongue of life from deeper days licked into view, it was scotched. I began pushing at minds to get a glimpse of life below the fever . . .'

So far for his approach; you will taste at once the flavour of his scene. There has been a great effort on the part of writers to get down to what is called 'peasant speech'. Synge lifted a floorboard in an Aran croft to get the cadences of *The Playboy* and *Riders to the Sea*, and George Moore once explained to the writer that peasant speech was at once the most easy and the most difficult of forms: entirely without subterfuge, blunt, coarse even, but vital, never weakened by the use of abstract terms which, if we trouble to inquire, are without any real meaning at all. Now here *is* peasant speech, as genuine, as moving, as one reader at least ever remembers having encountered. When O'Donnell's characters speak one has the actual sense of physical awareness. For there is a stage when dialogue ceases to exist as such; we surrender to it as we do to certain music; the critical sense lapsing by its very impact.

This, I think, must always be true of what is called peasant speech, when each phrase is less a thought than an emotion, for a man may say little, may answer almost in monosyllables, but what he says is more nearly him than pages and pages of 'conversation'. Now here is O'Donnell's triumph. Listen to the speech of his characters. No one but people who have sprung to an exuberant life would speak as this; image tumbling over image, laughter in the turn of a phrase and impending tragedy in a pause, in a question.

Let *Islanders* be an introduction to him. It is indeed a magnificent book, apply what test you like. It is a story told with simpleness and directness. There is strength, the sheer joy of physical prowess, there is courage, there is tragedy borne with an overwhelming stoicism, but here, for all the horror and hopelessness of hunger (for a stone of flour is an event), is a people who have poetry in their souls. It is innate, the poetry of living. And with such a people there is a peculiar delicacy, a refinement, a breeding (using the word in

the Elizabethan sense), which makes every call on the artist. For by a paradox this simple life is not simple, as witness the subtle undertones that O'Donnell introduces.

There are scores of places in his books where a lesser novelist would have let himself go, and torn a passion to tatters; the stage is set for a scene, you would say, but O'Donnell, with a sure instinct for what is right rather than what is spuriously effective, does not let himself go, and this is the measure of his strength. The description, in *Islanders*, of the mother's collapse through hunger, the sudden realization of her sacrifice by her eldest son, the mounting horror of it all, is superb. Think of Charlie Doogan's race through the storm to get a doctor for his sister in childbirth, his great win at the regatta, the coming of the herring shoal, and the solitary gannet diving, and lastly that overwhelming scene of the mother's death — after the priest had anointed her she asked, almost with her dying breath, if there was flour in the house, tay for her children.

Or think, to move to actualities, of the shooting of the four I.R.A. leaders in Mountjoy Jail, the men with whom he had stood back to back in the Four Courts and in the cells, how Barrett said on the way to the firing squad, 'More of you will be asked to go this proud way', and then, thinking and musing, he remembers the packet of twenty Players he had just had and how his comrades were smoking stumps and how the remaining seventeen cigarettes were to be sent back to them.

This is the stuff of tragedy. But only an artist could ever convey it. Read *Adrigoole* (perhaps his best book), or his play *Wrack*, which has the sublimity of great tragedy, or again *On the Edge of the Stream* and *The Knife*. They are all the work of a man to whom these people, this countryside, are as real as his right hand. And being an artist and a man of the people, he can interpret them as possibly no one has done before.

MR. LAURENCE HOUSMAN'S QUEEN VICTORIA

By
BONAMY DOBRÉE

When John Davidson was asked, 'What was your object in writing this play?' he answered, 'To give delight'. Whether or not this was Mr. Housman's intention in writing this series, the result is certainly to give delight: perhaps it is his own pleasure in producing it that communicates itself to the reader. What, then, we have to ask ourselves, is the quality of the delight? for that is the way we judge between, say, *Paradise Lost* and *The Rape of the Lock*. It is to the latter that we will naturally relate these playlets of Mr. Housman's, for from them we get the same delicious sense of a thing perfectly done, of a means admirably adapted to its end, and that odd sense of being made more alert to life which is one of the functions of a work of art. It is, of course, only by implication that it probes very far below the surface of life: but what a relief to be freed from the eternal coxcombry of our moral pretensions, and to meet, for once in a way, an indubitable work of art which does not attempt to do *everything*!

Nevertheless Mr. Housman has succeeded in drawing a solid picture of Queen Victoria from her childhood to the Diamond Jubilee, a picture drawn with understanding,

admiration, something of that awe the tremendous old lady used to inspire, but also with a continuous sense of humour. The Queen is never made into a comic figure, yet a feeling of comedy pervades all three volumes — real comedy, which makes life spin along more briskly. We see her in relation to Albert, to her mother, to her ministers, and many other people, in all her courage, her obstinacy, her self-centredness and her love, and, it may be said, her narrowness. The only person who ever conquered her was Albert, though it might be said that Disraeli seduced her. What, however, did defeat her, though she was hardly aware of it, was the English Constitution, or, if we prefer, the oligarchy which ruled England in her day. All these things are shown with a fine mastery and subtlety: the books constitute a biography of Queen Victoria.

These Palace Plays — the two later volumes also bear this as sub-title — are not really plays: they would be shattered in the commercial theatre, though they would go well as drawing-room plays acted to an intimate circle. They are dialogues, or rather, conversations, revealing the characters of all the people concerned. In the case of the Queen and her Consort we see character developing, the germ of obstinacy and strength of will in both of them coming to maturity. Some scenes are more dramatic than others: there is one, for instance, between the royal pair, 'Bertie', Martin Tupper and Disraeli, which has an amusingly dramatic conclusion, though all to some extent have a slight dramatic movement, as befits a conversation rather than a dialogue. Mr. Housman improves as he goes on. In *Palace Plays* he was still searching for the form which best suited what he had to say; one gets pleasure from them rather than delight. The whole series, however, must be read: the volumes weave together, and it is to be hoped that some day they will appear in collected form (no, not 'omnibus': that vehicle is far too clumsy to describe the effect) so that the sequence can be placed integrally before us.

It is also to be hoped that Mr. Housman will add at least another volume, say a *Victoria and Bertie*, or indeed, *and all her family*.

One does not know whether the depressing word 'research' should be applied to the labours Mr. Housman must have undergone to achieve his very considerable knowledge of the events and personages. Is it research to dive after pearls? At all events we finish our reading convinced that Mr. Housman knows all about it, and we therefore, in our turn, feel the satisfaction of knowing all about it. It is remarkable how many events, anecdotes, and personalities Mr. Housman has been able to get into his silhouettes, without in any way overburdening his work. Silhouette is perhaps not the right word, line drawings would be more descriptive, drawings executed with delicacy and sureness, and, especially, with a great deal of imagination. Finally, of course, it is this imagination which produces the effect of delight — that, and a very skilful use of words which though carefully chosen never for a moment give the notion of being 'literary' in the bad sense. Every word seems to come naturally, conversationally, whether from the royal family, Melbourne, Palmerston, Lord Kitchener, or any of the whole gallery of portraits which surround the magisterial figure of her indomitable Majesty.

[1933]

MISS MOLE

By
MARY ROSS

Several years ago, without fanfare of trumpets or benefit of the calcium light of publicity, a novel named *William* made its appearance. Its reputation was spread almost solely by word of mouth. One reader after another discovered the book, told a sympathetic friend about it in such glowing terms that he, too, was impelled to seek it out, and it sailed along by virtue of its qualities until there was an expectant group on the lookout for the next work of this almost anonymous author.

Since *William*, three other novels by E. H. Young have been published, novels which were read with pleasure but also with a little disappointment until one learned that they represented earlier work, in point of time, and hence less of the author's maturity. Obviously, E. H. Young is a writer more concerned with the perfecting of a story than with keeping a name in the public eye. And *Miss Mole* is a book which will delight the admirers of *William* and, one may surely hope, a far wider circle of discriminating readers who missed that satisfying story.

For 'satisfying' is, I think, the word that comes most readily to my mind in relation to the work of E. H. Young, despite the lien on that term that advertising of a very different kind of article has tried to establish. In even greater degree than its predecessors, *Miss Mole* has the qualities that make them unique: a quiet simplicity which is not in the least

unsophisticated; a real brilliance which is steadily incandescent, rather than glittering; wit, the play of an intelligence which understands and accepts the emotions; that quality of humanism (not in the trade-marked sense of the word) which looks at the world and finds it various, but good; the capacity to understand and accept experience as it comes that makes the activity of living, be it rough or smooth, its own reward.

Miss Hannah Mole lived her life within the provincial frame of a little English town and in the peculiarly trying position of impecunious gentility — companion to old ladies, housekeeper to a Nonconformist widower minister and his jangling children — a person denied personality by the smug people whose roofs she was forced to share. But behind her lay the oasis of a country childhood, a habit of courageous adventure from which she never had flinched, be her worn purse ever so thin, and a joyous sensitiveness to beauty and expectancy. A thousand books launched by such circumstances as those of Miss Hannah Mole have been wrecked on the reefs of sentimentality, but this is too clear-sighted, too witty to be even in danger. It sails past in gay serenity, and only toward the close does one discover that unexpected, but not surprising, chapter in the life of the little housekeeper that explains the qualities that have kept her whole.

There is an obvious comparison between the work of E. H. Young and that of Jane Austen — the sophistication and eagerness of spirit unhampered by what outwardly might seem provincial. But as in the case of the older writer, the charm is a fairly special one, incomprehensible to those who do not share it, to be experienced rather than described. For those who appreciate her wit and gallantry, Miss Hannah Mole will be an abiding delight.

[1930]

DICKENS PUT WISE:

A HYPOTHETICAL INQUISITION

By
H. F. RUBINSTEIN

Scene A Publisher's Office
Time Then and Now (in relativity)

PUBLISHER Come in, Mr. Dickens. Sit down, won't you? I'll come straight to the point. I like your new novel immensely, but there are some rather alarming features in it.

DICKENS Alarming?

PUBLISHER Perhaps Mr. Halibut had better explain . . . Did I introduce you, by the way? . . . Mr. Halibut is my solicitor.

DICKENS Solicitor?

HALIBUT I have been reading your book for libel, Mr. Dickens. Publishers have to be extremely cautious these days you know. The present state of the law and the enormous sums of damages awarded in some recent cases—

PUBLISHER Excuse me, gentlemen . . . (*He slips out of the room*)

DICKENS But my book is a work of fiction, Mr. Halibut.

HALIBUT That of itself is not very reassuring, I'm afraid. Indeed in a sense it may be said to increase the risk. So long

as an author sticks to facts, at least he knows where he is. It's when he starts shooting his arrows into the air . . . You're aware, of course, that it's no defence to a libel action to prove you never heard of the person you've libelled . . . Until that decision[1] is overruled, every author and publisher has to face the possibility of being ruined by a coincidence.

DICKENS But in that case — if I'm not dreaming all this . . . ?

HALIBUT What am I here for, eh? To talk about avoidable risks, Mr. Dickens. You call your novel *The Personal History of David Copperfield.* I observe that the initials of your hero's name correspond in reverse order to those of your own.

DICKENS What about it?

HALIBUT It suggests — to one reader at least — that the story may not be wholly fictitious — may be, to some extent, autobiographical.

DICKENS It is.

HALIBUT And would be recognized as such? I mean, by persons who have come into contact with you at one time or another?

DICKENS By a certain number.

HALIBUT Precisely what I feared. You see, identification is the first important point that has to be established by a claimant for libel . . .

DICKENS But I don't understand. Are you suggesting that I may have libelled myself?

HALIBUT Not at all, sir. But if David Copperfield is identified with Charles Dickens, it opens up the possibility of identifying other characters in his 'Personal History' — I have in mind, of course, the unsympathetic characters . . .

[1] Hulton *v.* Jones (1910), establishing as a precedent that where there is evidence that some people might reasonably believe that the Plaintiff was the person referred to, it is immaterial that the writer never intended to refer to him.

DICKENS Perhaps I'd better change the name.

HALIBUT That won't carry you very far, so long as your hero remains recognizable from other circumstances — age, environment, physical characteristics, family history, details of his career, incidents in which he figures . . .

DICKENS Are you asking me to re-write the entire book?

HALIBUT I'm not asking you to do anything, Mr. Dickens, except to furnish me with information which will enable me to advise my clients on a difficult situation. I appreciate that the autobiographical interest is fundamental. That being so, they will have to consider very carefully whether it would be reasonably safe to publish the novel at all — so long, at any rate, as the prototypes of some of the characters remain alive . . .

DICKENS Good Heavens!

HALIBUT Or, alternatively, how far it may be practicable to mitigate the dangers by disguising beyond the possibility of identification such of the characters as may have living counterparts. One can, of course, exclude from consideration all purely fictitious characters. Unless I am mistaken, I should say that rules out Little Emily and the Steerforth group?

DICKENS I'm afraid Rosa Dartle was drawn from life. I had in mind a lady I used to meet socially in my bachelor days.

HALIBUT Was the name at all similar?

DICKENS She was a Miss Leigh — Mary Anne Leigh. I don't know what became of her. I haven't seen her for years.

HALIBUT Was she ever, to your knowledge, a lady's companion?

DICKENS Not to my knowledge.

HALIBUT I think we might chance that. What about the Micawbers?

DICKENS Mr. Micawber is my own father. He won't mind.

HALIBUT Then I needn't inquire into the accuracy of the allegations affecting his financial credit. . . .

DICKENS I think not.

HALIBUT If Mr. Micawber is your father, it follows, presumably, that you have no stepfather . . . I was thinking of Mr. Murdstone. Is he purely imaginary?

DICKENS Not altogether. I had in mind a man called Lamert — a relative of my mother's.

HALIBUT Lamert . . . Murdstone. Hm! Mr. Murdstone's Christian name was Edward, if I remember rightly.

DICKENS Mr. Lamert's is James.

HALIBUT Had he black side-whiskers?

DICKENS Let me think. No, he was clean-shaven.

HALIBUT Were you at all closely associated with him as a boy?

DICKENS I entered his employment at the age of ten. He had a boot-blacking factory by Hungerford Market. That is to say, he was Manager of the firm.

HALIBUT Murdstone's warehouse was in Blackfriars, was it not?

DICKENS Yes, I have described the business in quite general terms.

HALIBUT No mention of boot-blacking?

DICKENS None whatever.

HALIBUT What about Miss Murdstone?

DICKENS Quite mythical.

HALIBUT Would you say that any of the incidents relating to Messrs. Murdstone and Grinby might serve to identify Mr. Lamert or his business in the mind of a reasonably intelligent person?

DICKENS I shall have to consider that. The whole episode is founded on my very vivid recollection of — of the unhappiest period of my life. . . .

HALIBUT (*after a suitable interval*) Then you'll go carefully through that part of the book, and eliminate anything that suggests the possibility of identification?

DICKENS Very well.

HALIBUT While we are on the subject of your family, Mr. Dickens, may I ask if you have or had an aunt resembling Mrs. Betsy Trotwood?

DICKENS Alas, no . . . you are not going to tell me that there's anything libellous in *her* character?

HALIBUT I had in mind the gentleman who boards with her, Richard Babley, known familiarly as 'Mr. Dick'. Eccentricity is one thing, but to describe a man as insane — however harmlessly . . .

DICKENS Mr. Dick is a pure invention.

HALIBUT Thank you. We come now to . . . where is my list? . . . Ah, Mr. Creakle, 'an ignorant and ferocious schoolmaster'.

DICKENS I happen to have made a particular study of educational establishments in this country. You may remember in a previous book of mine, *Nicholas Nickleby*, I gave some account of the cruelties practised in a so-called 'private school' in Yorkshire.

HALIBUT Wholly imaginary, no doubt?

DICKENS On the contrary, sir. My Dotheboys Hall was the direct result of a visit I paid to a place called Bowes Academy, Greta Bridge, conducted by one Thomas Shaw.

HALIBUT Did Mr. Shaw take any action?

DICKENS He did not.

HALIBUT Very fortunate — for your publishers. May I ask if 'Salem House' originated in a similar visit of inspection?

DICKENS As it happens, no. It was founded on a general impression of hundreds of places. The names were quite fortuitous.

HALIBUT And the topography — Yes, I think you made it

sufficiently vague . . . There is another schoolmaster, by the way, whose domestic life is touched on . . .

DICKENS Dr. Strong.

HALIBUT *That* is the name. His wife is unfaithful — and then there's the lover . . .

DICKENS A composite of several cases that have come to my notice. I had no particular persons in mind.

HALIBUT Good. That disposes of your schoolmasters . . . I feel a little apprehensive about your treatment of some representatives of my own profession. I have a strong suspicion that you are not without some inside knowledge of legal life.

DICKENS I must admit that. I was for some two years a junior clerk with Messrs. Ellis and Blackburn, Solicitors, of Gray's Inn. Afterwards I practised as a shorthand-writer in Doctors' Commons . . .

HALIBUT In Doctors' Commons? That accounts, then, for Messrs. Spenlow & Jorkins!

DICKENS Did they strike you as true to life?

HALIBUT With just that fatal touch of caricature . . . I trust you had no particular firm in mind?

DICKENS The cap would fit more than one, I fancy.

HALIBUT Fortunately! There may be safety in numbers — always assuming that you've avoided any distinctive characteristics that would point to one definite quarter . . . I take it you've made sure from the Law List that the names are available — I mean that they don't correspond to those of any existing firm?

DICKENS I confess it hadn't occurred to me. I'll see to it at once.

HALIBUT And that brings me to Mr. Wickfield of Canterbury. You'd better check his name as well. I'm frankly rather uneasy about that gentleman. I suppose you couldn't substitute a fictitious place for Canterbury?

DICKENS Do you really consider that necessary?

HALIBUT I'm thinking of those trust funds under Wickfield's control. The number of elderly solicitors practising in the City of Canterbury must be extremely limited. If one of them should happen to be a widower, for example, and fond of port . . . Had you a prototype for Wickfield, by the way?

DICKENS Not in Canterbury — nor in the legal profession.

HALIBUT Had that prototype a daughter that might be taken for Agnes Wickfield?

DICKENS Yes — no. Let me consider . . . It all depends . . .

HALIBUT What about that rascally clerk of his, Uriah Heep?

DICKENS My creation entirely.

HALIBUT Including his turns of speech — his perpetual insistence that he is 'a very umble person'?

DICKENS I borrowed that from a casual acquaintance.

HALIBUT A lawyer's clerk, by any chance?

DICKENS He may have been. I can't remember exactly.

HALIBUT Just the kind of thing that might give rise to a claim . . .

DICKENS Are you suggesting that I should remove every reference to Heep's humility?

HALIBUT It would obviously be prudent.

DICKENS My God! This is intolerable! My brain is reeling! (*he rises*) . . . I can promise you one thing, Mr. Halibut. If ever I write another novel — which at the moment is extremely problematical — I shall have no little to say about the monstrous condition of affairs revealed to me this morning. If the law refuses to recognize an author's natural right to freedom of expression, the law must be altered.[1] I intend to set an agitation on foot without delay (*he resumes his seat*). And now let us put our two heads together, Mr. Halibut. . . .

[1] The case of Hulton *v.* Jones was decided in the House of Lords. It can only be overruled by Act of Parliament.

LONDON, N.W.

from a drawing by Muirhead Bone,
reproduced in *THE LONDON PERAMBULATOR* by James Bone

A NEW NOVELIST

By
NAOMI ROYDE-SMITH

The reviewer who has sufficient authority and experience to free him — or, rather less frequently, her — from the temptation to be witty at the expense of an incompetent or boring novelist, has often to work quite hard in order to give a just and dispassionate account of the many quite good books that must be noticed whether they deserve it on their own merits or have that news value which is often, though not always, distressingly unconnected with literary excellence.

To such a reviewer there come, at rare intervals two consoling experiences. The first occurs when a new work by a recognized master of craft offers that sense of relief experienced by all critics who feel safe for an hour, or a day, in the hands of a writer who knows how to write and so, from the outset, gives attention for enjoyment. Once in every year or so books by these careful and accomplished writers enable the fortunate critic to retire from desk to armchair and yield to the pleasure of formulating considered praise.

The other, rather more exacting, joy is aroused by the discovery of a new talent. So many first novels are good in the same way, that it has become almost more exhausting to appreciate their bright and often delusive promise than it is to find new ways of praising the babies of one's friends during their first weeks when, wrapped in almost identical shawls

and looking as like one another as newly-hatched ducklings, they are offered for one's admiring comment.

But once in a way a first novel as burning bright as *High Wind in Jamaica* or as deep and shining as *Martin Schuler* gives the reviewer a just occasion for shouting, and now *Hostages to Fortune* must be added to the list.

A loud shout would be inappropriate to the heralding of Miss Elizabeth Cambridge as a new novelist. Her book is too quiet in itself to be the cause of noise in others. But no one can read far in its clear pages without that sense of ease that comes from good workmanship: those who can read them without a cumulative inclination to chuckle, not always silently, do not deserve to have so delicate and rich a talent offered for them to praise or blame.

Quite simply Miss Cambridge begins at a beginning. Catherine has just given birth to her first child.

> ' "My word," Catherine thought, "that's not a baby, it's a person."
>
> 'She looked at Nurse. Nurse had not observed the phenomenon. She was presenting proudly a nice little girl.'

There, with the utmost economy, we have Catherine, who is to be with us throughout the book, and Nurse who, being 'monthly', is to vanish to give place to Lowe, who conforms to no standards but her own. It is at first the author's deftness that enchants the reader's attention. She has given us Catherine at once — in a line that is to be followed and filled in, but hardly surpassed, for significance until the portrait is completed and Catherine has grown old enough to be a grandmother. She gives us Audrey, the person not the baby, just as definitely.

> ' "Mrs. Cohen's compliments, and do the people next door know that their baby is crying?"
>
> ' "The people next door present their compliments, and they do indeed know the baby is crying."

'In a few days Audrey gave up crying and resigned herself to the business of eating, sleeping and growing.'

Nor does William, Audrey's father, who is away on active service, remain unknown to us, though at first unseen.

'Catherine was retrimming a hat — she knew that William would be home on leave at any moment. He would expect her to look attractive but would not want to spend money to achieve that result. She hoped he would be taken in by the hat . . . She was left with the feeling of humble gratitude when William proposed, with great inappropriateness, in the piece like the inside of a concertina between two railway carriages.'

So much for William; he is a doctor. When the war is over he settled down in far too large a house, to build up a country practice and to cultivate his garden. He and Catherine have two more children, Adam and Bill.

'Slowly, laboriously, the years swung through the cycle of the seasons, crawling up to April, tumbling over into the glory of May, waning, falling away like a dead leaf, and leaving behind them as little impression as is made by a leaf's fall. Catherine wondered that so much trouble should have so little result.'

That is the story. 'So much trouble, so little result.'

Catherine lives the strenuous working years of a country doctor's wife, trying to bring up her children on very small means, living precariously in the true sense of that now debased word, depending on the light within for guidance and illumination, hoping that at least she has set her children in the way of happiness. . . .

'Another folly! She leaned, in the dusk, against the rough tweed of William's sleeve and thought that, at last, even that wish had left her and that it was impossible, in such a world, to plan happiness for her children.'

'And with the loss of that, the last of her ambitions, she lay still and was content.'

It is all simple, quiet and inevitable. The picture as a whole in spite of lovely sunlit passages, and a rare half-hour of escape into idleness and dreaming, is low in tone and carefully truthful in detail like some sweet masterpiece by Vermeer of Delft that has been dimmed by time. It is indeed in this rather wilful lowering of the tone of the whole story that Miss Cambridge betrays her one hint of inexperience. She has been too determined not to sentimentalize her Catherine and has set her face too firmly against romance. So sensitive and lovely a creature as this woman whose mind we are permitted to explore must have had, if only in her mind, adventures more personal and enthralling than are here recorded, and would certainly have evoked from outside some romantic friendship, some compensating if platonic or unspoken passion such as is the outward evidence and testimony to such beauty as hers. A more experienced writer would have had the courage to add so much to her tale. We are grateful to the writer for doing nothing to spoil the level tone of her, and long after the book has been read and put away for a future reading, it remains in the mind even without the final glow of romance as a lovely and memorable book.

[1933]

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By
HELEN SIMPSON

'What do you read in bed?' someone asked idly at luncheon. We each had our different answer; shockers, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, books for review. Then a still small voice said — and at once I knew that this response could not be bettered: 'Cookery books.'

Since that day I have followed the healthy practice of reading about food before going to sleep. It allows the imagination exercise, directing it down garden paths among the fruits of the earth; it teaches, or rather, to use a gentler term, it induces speculation in practical chemistry; it compels an observance of the calendar, so that time is not wasted considering the possibilities of asparagus in December or haddocks in August; it leads to good and greedy dreams. The best bedside work, I find, is Mrs. Beeton in that first edition which made her name, where quotations from Shakespeare accompany a recipe for soused gurnard, and the section on meat begins: 'By the general assent of mankind the Empire of Nature has been divided into three Kingdoms.'

That first edition is hard to come by: but there is always Miss Florence White. I have known her *Good Things in England* since it first came out some three years ago, and I never cease to wonder at the skill with which her recipes are chosen. They are antique, yet unfailingly palatable. And throughout there are common-sense accompaniments of

advice such as that on frying sausages, which simply cannot be bettered, or that on serving claret, with its reassuring epilogue: 'It is very difficult to get drunk on claret.'

Compared with this work her later little volume, *Flowers as Food*, may be regarded as an essay in virtuosity: the kind of brilliant, short, and difficult show piece, which a practised musician offers as an encore. It makes good reading, but remote. There are few recipes here of which the drowsing mind can anticipate performance next day. I should like to try stuffed nasturtium flowers, but I believe that jessamine liqueur would resemble a mauve drink I had once in France, which smelt to heaven and was named — this discovery came later — Parfait Amour. And I don't agree with Mrs. Crisp, who bruised her cowslips in a mortar before making wine of them; I have found that to get clearness and a good colour the less you touch your cowslips the better.

Mr. Shand, who has been my guide for years among the mazes of the wines of France, has an engaging trick of speaking his mind in print. Most of us, like Echo, give back that which we have heard most lately, and are terrified of showing prejudice. Mr. Shand wears his prejudices like plumes, and announces in his preface to *A Book of Food* that this, in the matter of food, is the only honesty. But he joins hands with Miss White when he says that the cookery of a nation is as much part of its traditions as are its laws and language.

Thereafter they part company. Mr. Shand gives no recipes, though he indicates a thousand. His is the philosopher's eye, which surveys The Groaning Board to view, not details of the preparation of edible substances, but man himself in the making. He perceives historical consequences, and quotes with approval that Frenchman who declared that the Reformation might never have come about had Luther been permitted to eat game on Fridays. This is a book for the contemplative, the Trappist rather than the Jesuit of eaters.

(He is, by the way, abominably unjust to Mrs. Beeton on page 224.)

Mr. Norman Davey's endeavour is to help *The Hungry Traveller in France*; and having often found that to travel hopefully and hungrily was much better than to arrive at certain much advertised hotels, I for one am grateful to him. He gives, not only the restaurants worth visiting, but the way to get to them, their inner geography, the idiosyncrasies of their proprietors and even the engaging tricks of the animals attached to them. He warns you that at certain times of the day you may have to wait for a table; against the cocktails in this hotel, the mussels in that, and the violinist's imitation of a dog in the other. All the time his writing is limpid as a good consommé, and his enthusiasm clear and fierce as a charcoal fire.

Mrs. Adam goes further with her *Kitchen Ranging*, but I will not say she fares worse. Her plan is not to help the traveller enjoy his meals, but to afford the stay-at-homes some spice of the traveller's variety. Here Belgian and Dutch dishes stand beside a Canadian backwoods stew. When she disapproves a foreign practice (as the eating of larks) she says so. There is some fine confused feeding in this book, which makes it all the more acceptable to read in bed. The digestion of the mind does not revolt at the combination of, let us say, brains and prunes (page 234). Nor, having consumed in succession an Old Fashioned Thanksgiving Turkey, a Rabbit's Egg Nest, and some Porter Jelly, does it tremble for consequences.

The mind's eye we all know; the palate of the mind has an equal claim to enter common parlance. For the mental gourmet there are no regrets, no sermons and soda water the day after. His appetite is immortal, his choice unlimited by latitude or season, his capacity what he wills, his anticipations never disappointed. In short, read these books, and any other cookery books you may lay hands on, in bed.

PAULINE SMITH

By
ARNOLD BENNETT

Pauline Smith was born in the Little Karoo, a name which to most people will convey nothing.

The Little Karoo is a plain (with everywhere prospects of magnificent mountain ranges) upon which are cultivated vines, tobacco, grain, and especially ostriches, but only in rare patches — where water can be persuaded out of the earth. This water is brackish; for drinking-water the inhabitants have to depend on rain hoarded in tanks; happily there is rain, and happily the rainwater will keep sweet for six months. The inhabitants are chiefly Dutch (some of French descent), with a few English and Scotch of the hardier sort. The main thing about the Little Karoo is the distances which separate the hamlets one from another; these distances are magnified by the primitive means of transport. Up to a dozen years ago the whole transport of the Little Karoo was conducted by ox-wagons, Cape carts, donkey-wagons, mules and horses — the ox-wagon being the ship of the Karoo. Anybody who has seen an ox walk can judge the sobriety and moderation of the movement; anybody who hasn't, can't.

Cape Town, the capital of South Africa, is an important place, and I would say naught to diminish its importance; but since even to-day it counts barely a hundred thousand citizens, the citizens of the big towns of Britain and the United States are not likely to be over-impressed by its prestige. Neverthe-

less, in the eyes of the Little Karoo its prestige was and is enormous, and the inhabitants of the Little Karoo have to visit the humming, bewildering metropolis sometimes. How do they reach it? Up to as late as 1913 the favourite way for the English colonists was to trek first to Mossel Bay and then to take ship, the voyage lasting in good weather a day and a night — and in bad weather any number of days. But to get to Mossel Bay the travellers had to cross the Outeniqua Mountains, with passes of extreme steepness; the old Cradock Pass, abandoned many years ago, was so steep that the oxen would ascend the final slopes on their knees, and when the oxen could not get up even on their knees the men would take the wagons to pieces and carry them piece by piece over the summits. As for the Dutch, the South African descendants of this historic seafaring race would never trust themselves to the sea; they went to Cape Town by land, and the journey occupied days and days.

Such were the conditions in the not very distant days in which most of *The Little Karoo* tales are set. The colonists, as you will gather from Pauline Smith's pictures of them, have the characteristics which you would expect from a people so situated. They are simple, astute, stern, tenacious, obstinate, unsubduable, strongly prejudiced, with the most rigid standards of conduct — from which standards the human nature in them is continually falling away, with fantastic, terrific, tragic, or quaintly comic consequences. They are very religious, and very dogmatically so. They make money and save it. Lastly, they enjoy a magnificent climate, which of course intensifies their passionate love of the Karoo.

Miss Smith's father was an Englishman born in China, and her mother is a Scotswoman from Aberdeenshire. The hamlet of Oudtshoorn, on the banks of the Grobelaars and Olifants rivers, was her birthplace. She had the advantage, from the novelist's point of view, of passing her most impres-

sionable years amid the pristine civilization of the Little Karoo, for Oudtshoorn lay in the heart of the Little Karoo; it was then a small village, and much of its commerce was carried on by means of barter. Also the fact that her father was a doctor of medicine — the first London M.D. to settle in the Little Karoo — with a district as big as several counties, must have been an advantage to her. The doctor has contacts with the population denied to all other professions save the religious, and these contacts must exercise a powerful but indirect influence upon his children. The remoteness of Oudtshoorn may be gauged from the detail that in earlier days it had no resident minister; the communion service was only an annual event. At the period of these stories Oudtshoorn had achieved a resident minister and a quarterly communion service.

On the veldt Pauline Smith was taught by governesses. At the age of twelve she migrated to England to be educated. An early age to leave an environment, but the impressions had been made — deep, intense, lasting. The young girl carried away with her sufficient material for a lifetime of writing. And since then, on more than one occasion, she has refreshed and strengthened her knowledge of Karoo life on the spot. Oudtshoorn rapidly developed, and is now the most important station of the railway line between Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.

Miss Smith's first literary work was done at school — sketches of Karoo life for children; not much prescience was needed to see that the author of these sketches would soon be producing sketches of Karoo life for adults. Her first published work, however, dealt with Scottish life, and appeared in that great organ of North Britain, *The Aberdeen Free Press*. Thenceforward Miss Smith wrote exclusively about the Little Karoo. Her work in periodicals received little notice until Mr. Middleton Murry published *The Pain* in his

monthly review, *The Adelphi*. *The Pain* was instantly greeted, from various parts of the world, as something very fine; and I, perhaps the earliest wondering admirer of her strange, austere, tender, and ruthless talent, had to answer many times the question: 'Who is Pauline Smith?' I would reply: 'She is a novelist.' 'What are her novels?' came the inquiry. 'She hasn't written any yet,' I would say, 'but she will.' It is no part of my business here to appraise the gifts of Pauline Smith. The reader will decide for himself whether or not she has unusual originality, emotional power, sense of beauty, moral backbone. This is her first book.

[1925]

JAMES JOYCE

By
ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

In this year 1935, *Ulysses*, Joyce's masterpiece on which his fame rests, can be bought in Germany and France, in translation or in the original. During the last year, it has been a best seller throughout the U.S.A., since the American Courts have upheld the judgment that the book is free from any morally detrimental elements. But in Great Britain, the country of the author's origin, the book is unobtainable. To review the work of Joyce apart from his *chef d'œuvre*, is like examining a decapitated body or criticizing St. Paul's Cathedral, ignoring the dome.

Two of Joyce's works prior to the production of *Ulysses* are by-products, *Chamber Music* and *Exiles*. *Chamber Music*, if we leave aside Joyce's nine-year-old essay on Parnell, of which no copy is known to be extant, and his essay on the Irish National Theatre, is his first book. As a collection of Elizabethan Imitations, it is excellent; as a contribution to literature it is negligible. It merely indicates the independence of Joyce's mind, that at the period when the Celtic Revival was at its strongest, he should have chosen Herrick rather than Yeats as a model.

Similarly *Exiles*, produced between *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, is unimportant, a play so bad that it could only have been written by a good writer. Full of false diction and artificial situations, it is begotten by Ibsen

on Mammon; and its interest for anyone except a student of Joyce is very small.

There remain *Dubliners* and *Portrait of the Artist*. *Dubliners*, the collection of short stories, was completed in 1904, but it was not published till ten years later, owing to the timidity of publishers. The first few stories in the book establish Joyce as a master in the existent European tradition of Tchekoff. They prove that he could do what other people were trying to do, as well or better. But the book is not all of a piece. Revolting from the neat mechanical plots of Maupassant, and from his even more mechanical psychology, Joyce set himself to create characters, who should exist before and after the duration of the story, instead of being tossed aside, like Maupassant's, as useless puppets when their turn was done. He succeeded in this aim, but in doing so he lost Maupassant's grip of form. Many of his stories fizzle out in anticlimax. It is not till the final story, *The Dead*, that he succeeds in finding the solution of his difficulty in one of those incidents which crystallize the experience of a lifetime in one evening. Judged technically the book is the struggle between naturalism and form, and the last story is the answer. That is not to deny that the others are not vivid, interesting and valuable, despite their artistic imperfection.

A modification of style takes place in the course of *Dubliners*. Beginning with purely objective writing, Joyce gradually evolves that fusion between the objective and the subjective, which is the characteristic both of his two later novels and of living itself.

It is typical of Joyce that, having perfected the form of the short story, he should then turn to the novel as a form; and fulfil in that medium the prophecy that he made in *The Dead*. In the history of English literature, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is more important than *Ulysses*. It was the first novel in which the barrier between internal and

external fact was broken down. The problem of preceding psychological writers was thus solved. In the place of the early analytical technique, Joyce put a synthesis of mental content. That is, where earlier writers gave the skeleton of the psyche, Joyce gives the body. It is the measure of the success of his experiment that the style of *Portrait of the Artist* no longer appears revolutionary. His method has become the common method of modern writing.

Divested of novelty, the novel, now after twenty-one years, can be judged in its true perspective; and it is still fresh, vigorous and modern. The minute observation which was the merit of *Dubliners* is complemented by intricate subjective writing, the fact of thought interwoven with the fact of action. The revolution which flowered in *Ulysses* has its root in *Portrait of the Artist*. The earlier book, in my opinion, is the finer of the two in form, less clumsy, lighter, a better proportioned whole. It may even be that while Joyce's notoriety will rest on *Ulysses*, his fame will depend on his first novel. It is at least certain that if any literature of our time survives, *The Dead* and *Portrait of the Artist* will be included.

RACE ME, LOVE

A Story by
H. A. MANHOOD

It was as a bloom-cheeked country lad of ten that John Dukey first entered Squire Camelace's service, receiving the title of Boots and a truly bewildering share of comfort. And because he was neat and willing as a weathercock he found favour even with old Maily, the jealous-fingered butler, from whom he acquired a crusted kind of wisdom and a solemnity of mind and bearing well suited to his thin, beautifully melancholy features.

At first he had dreaded necessary visits to the dim, cob-webbed cellars under the sprawl-pawed old house, thinking them to be foully haunted, but habit had brought understanding and when Maily died of a fit, his mouth open as if it were one o'clock and the cuckoo stuck, he went sturdily to the Squire to beg his title, upright and dignified in his words. Sucking in his cheeks Squire Camelace looked him over and turned him round to see if his seat was shiny, unexpectedly bidding him help himself from the sideboard. Whisky there was, ale, port, and a drop of claret, and John, knowing the tendency of the first three to rush to his feet and make them dance, chose the last, drinking with real relish, for he had been tasting broken honeycomb in the kitchen and was in need of a tongue-cutter. Grunting approval the Squire flapped his hands under his coat-tails like a turtle on the move, nodding towards the house-keys bunched like a huge, fighting crab on the shining mahogany:

'Your pay will be a pound a year for every key in addition to livery and keep,' and he went on looking and smiling at himself in the ormolu mirror while John tumbled out all in a hurry to count the keys.

Quickly now he came to respect, then to love the deep, quiet gloom of the cellars, going often to check and straighten, even naming and talking to the several toads living in pious security behind the butts, so that they got to know him very well and would sit pretty and watch and pant as if they'd each swallowed a watch and were waiting for it to chime. Sometimes, in a pure spirit of inquiry, he cracked a bottle and sniffed and sipped, judging a vintage for himself, his palate responding, pleased with the fragrant run of a fine wine, admirable phrases remaining in his mind so that he sometimes astonished the somewhat gluttonous Squire with a precise description of quality.

At forty, then, a year after the Squire's marriage, we find him in his prime, handsome and of leisurely habits, a little sad perhaps that love had passed him by but pleased with his lot, efficient and a wise cellarer, accustomed to eat a biscuit or so and a bit of double Gloucester in quiet solitude most mornings in the dim light cast through a swimmy green traplight which was lifted but once a year to allow fresh brewings to be piped into the butts [illegible]uped like the blackened teeth of a giant against a curving inner wall. Usually some wine went with the cheese, just a glass to sweeten the day and then John went about his duties, sustained and prepared for any call, gentle and manly, quick to follow the Squire's moods and those of his lady, though it was queer to be having a woman high in the house after thirty bachelor years. The Squire was ageing then but she was young and a beauty too, and dull the great house must have seemed to her in her freshness, though she did not show it to the eye.

Although it was the Squire who handed to John a hand-

some watch on the day when he'd thirty years of faithful service behind him, it was undoubtedly his wife who had prompted the gift, she being thoughtful that way and graciously aware of the value of good and faithful servants. Dangling the watch on its chain, the Squire, studying John's physique, nodded sorrowfully, wishing he had as much to offer his wife.

'Well done, John, lad, though 'tis more than a watch ye should be receiving, such a fine, upstanding fellow as you are. Have you never thought of marriage? Never! Well, well, 'tis a waiting gift in the hand of the Lord, eh, m'dear?'

Receiving the watch John blushed with pleasure and embarrassment and went exultantly away to the cellars, tempted, for the first time in his life, to celebrate the occasion with something rare and fitting. Spreading a fresh cloth upon the barrel-head under the traplight he brought a new cheese and moved thoughtfully from bin to bin, aware that extravagance on such an occasion would be excused, yet not wanting to rob the higher table if a suitable oddment could be found. After careful search he found in a cobweb-tented corner an exactly suitable item, a last magnum of Private Cuvée, 1906, many times offered but out of favour with the frivolous-palated Squire.

Bottle in hand he returned to the cheese, eating and drinking with deep appreciation, his mind pottering back over thirty years, the wine purling like sheer good news inside so that he came again and again at the bottle, exceeding a proper morning measure.

Presently, sweetly hazy in mind, but impenitent, he wandered back into the dimness of the cellar to rest awhile upon a mattress-pile of straw bottle guards, musing on old, meek contentments, drowsily desiring greater pleasure, remembering the Squire's words, imagining, dreamily, a most glorious fulfilment, a sweet fountaining of the senses in a sunny

paradise. Not often had he pondered on the love of woman, deeming the subject unpleasant in its details, but now it seemed to him that he loved and was beloved beyond all comparison and he tossed and muttered in splendid excitement, blinking suddenly from the bud of dream at a vague, delicately feminine figure standing by his cheese and champagne, eating and drinking with fastidious relish.

Gaily amused, imagining a maid in sportive mood, John raised himself and called merrily: 'Race me, Love!' running boyishly away into the depths of the cellar. Surprised but quick to respond, Love put down her glass and came running lightly after. In brisk chase they whirled through the dusty aisles until at last, breathless, Love caught John near to the mattress-pile of straw and together they stood in light, laughing clasp, lost in the dimness but sure of each other. Glowing-minded with a memory of dream John moved clumsily but decisively, lifting her grandly, determined not to stumble, going with her to the couch of straw, the silken sweetness of her springing through him. And there he laughed and played and whispered and did as he had done in the dream, sharing a most lovely ecstasy. Hearts pounded as if following the soul in its flight, calming slowly like two young birds after a first wing-lift and tumble, and presently, with a sigh, Love gravely straightened herself, kissing John once in deep gratefulness before she hastened silently away.

Alone again, terribly alone, John pondered and shook his sorely muddled head, calling loudly, pleadingly. And when there was no answer he doubted the truth of his experience, so vast and above all imagining had it been. Surely it was impossible for humans to blaze so sweetly, surely it had been but a dream born of the wine. Certainly no maid would have smelt and played as this Love had done. Sick at heart he pinched himself hardly, calling again and again, searching among the butts, going sadly at last to the bottle, returning

with it to the straw, emptying it briskly, waiting hopefully for the lifting fire and the return of Love, fighting an intolerable drowsiness.

But Love did not come again and presently he slept heavily, dreamlessly, waking much later to the tread of the Squire and his wife, come with candles to choose a wine for the evening. Surprising John with his bottle the Squire was astonished, then angered, but his wife soothed him deftly:

'It is right that he should dream on such a day as this and that they should be beautiful dreams. Remember he has only dreams, unlike us. . . .'

And smilingly she went away, arm-in-arm with the gaily hopeful Squire.

[1934]

SON OF WOMAN

By
MAX PLOWMAN

No writer of modern times has been the subject of such controversy as the late D. H. Lawrence. A phenomenon from the beginning, he was greeted with the word 'genius' from the day his poems first found their way into the old *English Review*. When *Sons and Lovers* appeared, the magic word was repeated with such insistence one tired of the sound of it and began to wish critics would restrain their exuberance in some sort of effort to define their terms. Then came the War, and *The Rainbow*, and with its suppression Lawrence found himself heavily left in the lurch. He had gone underground, delving among the roots of consciousness in search of the secret springs of sexual impulse, and that direction has been traditionally regarded as the way of unpleasantness. So rumour in literary London whispered that Lawrence was a creature of ungovernable moods and passions, and social doors automatically closed.

He retained, however, the esteem of John Middleton Murry who, with the brilliant Katherine Mansfield, had just started a new magazine of art and literature. The tale of their friendship has been told elsewhere, suffice it to say here that instead of ripening there came cleavage, deep and wide. Lawrence wrote *Women in Love* in his own justification. Murry attacked the book at length in the columns of *The Nation* and thereafter, with little intermission, the battle went

on. The conflict, never merely a personal one, has been between protagonists of diametrically opposed attitudes to life, Lawrence proclaiming, with ever louder insistence, the virtues of the physical senses, Murry enunciating, in terms of modern experience, the necessity for spiritual regeneration. While Murry was writing a *Life of Jesus*, Lawrence was writing *The Plumed Serpent*.

Each has had a following, but while Jonathan, in the person of Murry, has had his thousands, David, in the person of Lawrence, has had his tens of thousands. The mere volume of Lawrence's work has been such that there is hardly anyone interested in vital literature who is not ready to state his immediate response to Lawrence's attitude as shown in this extraordinary outpouring of poems, novels, plays, essays, pamphlets, and even paintings.

The quandary of amiable critics in dealing with such a vivid personality has been evident. Mr. J. C. Squire has expressed the opinion that Lawrence's work suffers from tuberculosis. Mr. Aldington has discovered in Lawrence the traditional English Heretic. Mr. Aldous Huxley's 'Rampion', that fictitious 'hardy and indomitable male', was commonly mistaken for a portrait of Lawrence; while Miss Rebecca West, with feminine instinct, discovers the wandering and visionary soul seeking semblance of its own fragrant transcience wherever beauty appears. Only the other day a young friend of Lawrence's had the hardihood to confess that Lawrence's opinions never affected him: a confession of such originality that it bordered upon affectation. For Lawrence's 'opinions' were not opinions but attestations of a great soul made after fierce conflict in struggles comparable with those Blake described as 'the torments of love and jealousy' — documentary evidences of suffering and enjoyment sustained at degrees of intensity unimaginable to men of little stature.

Into this world of controversial curiosity, fierce partisan-

ships, and feigned indifference, Mr. Murry has launched his story of Lawrence's creative life. His declared purpose is 'to save the truth of Lawrence from "the shallow people who take everything literally" '.

Certain it is that 'the shallow people' will turn and rend Mr. Murry with every imaginable epithet of abuse; for, with the inexorable logic of analysis, open to test by every reader of the novels, he shows, past hope of contradiction, that the popular idol of the shallow people has feet of clay: that 'the hardy and indomitable male' of fiction was in truth a hypersensitive and retarded man whose protestations of male independence were most often wailful expressions of a pathetic wish-dream.

That is one side of the picture — the side which will doubtless appeal most strongly to the crowd that loves sensational interest. There is another, and one which obviously lies near the heart of the author of this amazing book. It shows the portrait of a man Murry does not hesitate to compare with another Man of Sorrows: a man who was a prophet by calling and endowment: a man so richly gifted he was beloved above others by those who knew him; yet a man doomed by a blood tie — which his instinctive fidelity and spiritual honesty could not break — to tragedy so heartrending the reader's spirit writhes in the effort to conceive an imaginable way of escape. Lawrence's tragedy lay in his mother's love. Once that fact is fully recognized the tragic story Murry tells is seen as inevitable. What is contestable, and what will doubtless be contested for a generation, is the value of Lawrence's assertion of natural virtue and the resultant merits of his heroic efforts to escape a tragic fate.

In raising the figure of Lawrence to tragic eminence Murry has performed the one service necessary to a proper realization of Lawrence's greatness. That is the essential virtue of this book. In despite of its theme, it rebuilds the

man to heroic proportions and thus will again confound 'the shallow people', who may be expected to seek a victim for the negative exercise of their prejudices. But henceforth Lawrence's essential greatness will pass unquestioned, and not to have deeply experienced his work will be the mark of insensibility and blindness to the most significant writer of our day.

Son of Woman is an extraordinary book. Its insight is amazing: the sustained power of criticism, the ease with which heterogeneous material is brought into unity, the honesty and finality of the statement, put it into the category of big tasks accomplished once for all. It is as forthright a book as was ever written. It is a necessary book, tonic to the shifting airs and graces of Janus-headed criticism. It is desperately convincing. And yet . . . And yet. . . .

True; but not the whole truth. Full of imaginative forgiving; yet not whole in its forgiveness. Why?

I think the cause lies in the method, which is the method of psycho-analysis, in the strict and literal, and not in the therapeutic, meaning of the words. The method applied to such different people as Burns (with whom Lawrence has most in common) or Wordsworth, Nietzsche or Baudelaire, would be found to negate their positive significance; for ultimately it is one that brings such concentration upon condition that it obscures individuality: it is so concerned with what has been described as a temporal 'state' that it ends by negating 'the eternal individuality' of him who is passing through that state: thus it remains *a diagnosis of condition* in contradistinction to *a revelation of individuality*. And therein lies the fundamental insufficiency of all analysis. It can show us, inductively, what are the laws of life, but it cannot show us either the way of life or life itself. Only grace can do that.

Analysis is true — but only as far as it goes. And it does

not go as far as life. No soul can endure analysis and live. Analysis can bring down the bird from the air and show us the method of its life; but it cannot show us the living bird. Criticism, in other words, must be creative. Murry traces with penetrative accuracy the growth of the germ of disintegration in the soul of Lawrence; but the life which sustained that soul for forty-four years in this world escapes him. So that, actually, this is a study of the death, and not the life, of Lawrence. Another and an additional effort of the imagination is necessary to complete the picture, or rather to take the two sides of the picture and refashion it into a living whole. Such a work would contain all this book, and *something more*.

I am left wondering what spiritual energy could supply that 'something more,' and in my imagination I conceive a quality of dynamic forgiveness which Murry does not reach. His forgiveness is static. Were it dynamic it would give back to broken life the livingness which sustained it. That active power of forgiveness is a grace which the whole world of to-day awaits for its fulfilment.

[1931]

THE FLORIN BOOKS

By
HUBERT WILSON

The book world has seen many changes since the great series of financial crashes, nearly six years ago, to which we now look back as the ominous dawn of 'The Slump'. Some have developed by normal evolution, only hastened by the necessities of the time. But others were the final link in a chain of cause and effect springing direct from that father of catastrophes; and amongst these may be numbered, I think, the advent of the first twelve volumes of an attractive well-selected series of reprints, pleasantly dressed in a soft warm grey, and offered to the reader at precisely two shillings — The Florin Books!

Their appearance was modest, but in fact they attracted more attention than many new 'best-sellers'. They were a portent; public and booksellers alike took them to their hearts, and on to their shelves, in staggering numbers. Such success bred more success (not to mention the flattery of swift imitation!) and the happy publishers, casting about amongst past successes, added dozen after dozen to their numbers, until to-day there are listed seventy-seven titles — and every one of interest.

What was the secret of their success? Other publishers have produced long lists of books at two shillings, one and sixpence, a shilling, and even sevenpence; and they sell well amongst a certain class, and for the train. And such fine

series as Everyman, or the Oxford and Collins Classics, offer wonderful choice amongst the great books of the past. But none before had offered at such a price a series of modern copyright works, with the hallmark of quality.

The Florin Books have every kind of quality. The cloth in which they are bound is quiet and pleasing in colour, and, without being dull, refuses to take a finger-mark. Paper, type, and printing are good. But what matters most is the books themselves. The publishers seem to have been conspicuously successful in choosing just the type of book which, while attracting and holding the interest of the average reader by narrative power and skill in character-drawing, overstamps these qualities with the hallmark of the true literary artist; in one and all of these books one could point to the signs of subtle perception, sensitive prose, restraint and integrity.

For several years the three-and-sixpenny pocket series had made available much of the most interesting post-war literature; but the appeal on the whole was less universal, more definitely 'literary', and after they had satisfied their particular public the sales always fell off. But the Florin Books, after a sensational début, seem to have achieved permanency as a library for the intelligent man-in-the-street. Handy enough for the overcoat pocket, cheap enough for the train, they can take their place, when read, on the library shelves, or in the guest room, with fitness and confidence of their worth.

Remembering that these books are designed for the man to whom half a crown is a startling sum to pay for a book, especially when he can so easily borrow almost all he wants, it is no surprise to find that fiction forms the greater part of the series. It is almost all first-rate of its kind, though you will find little that is aimed at the merely 'modernist'. I think this is wise. These books must sell in large numbers, or they

cannot be produced at this price, and writers of the calibre of Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, James Joyce — even perhaps Aldous Huxley — have too much that is difficult to the untrained eye, or offensive to the conventional mind, for the purpose in view.

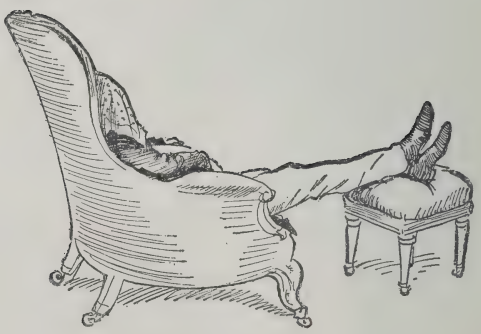
Yet there remains much to satisfy the most discriminating taste. There is, for example, Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, and amongst others that are established as classics of their time and kind I find Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Butler's *Erewhon*, and on a different plane, Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*. Amongst the more modern, one of the happiest choices of all, there is Hugh de Selincourt's *The Cricket Match*. Is it proper to feel for this all the admiration and affection that I do? I confess I do not know! But to me it is really a perfect and satisfying piece of writing. With realism, yet without cynicism or fear of sentiment, it presents, for me, the soul and spirit of English village life. And that should always keep it high in favour.

Then there are the earlier works of E. H. Young and Arnot Robertson, two outstanding women novelists, whose studies of middle-class people illustrate so well a special combination — peculiar I think to women writers — of subtle observation, sympathetic but unsentimental understanding, and gentle satire. But there is space only for a brief catalogue of the best known. Three books of Mary Webb's, *The Conquered* by Naomi Mitchison, that lively extravaganza, *Poet's Pub* by Eric Linklater, earlier satires of Beverley Nichols, *Babbitt* and two other novels by Sinclair Lewis, and sundry collections of stories. These give some indication of the scope and quality of the whole, so far as concerns fiction.

But that is not all. For with all these novels there are some other books of peculiar interest, each of which created a stir through the reading world. These owe their fascination, I think, to the combination of remarkable personalities with

picturesque events, people, and places, of other days or other lands. And each, I think, is outstanding in its kind. There is Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, a document which aroused a storm of controversy; and there is *Trader Horn*, the very best fairy-tale that ever came out of Africa — or did it all really happen after all? And hardly less interesting in their different ways are such books as Robert Graves' *Lawrence and the Arabs*, *Stalky's Adventures*, and *Ralph Rashleigh*.

To mention these is to do injustice to the rest, but of what use to go on? To readers of *Now and Then* most of this must be familiar. And if it serves to remind them of something they may have forgotten or overlooked, why then I hope they will have recourse to a bookshop — preferably mine!



BUTLER RE-READ

By

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

Most of us, I imagine, read *The Way of All Flesh* when we were round about twenty, and were greatly impressed, even influenced by it. The other day I read it again, and was astonished to find how well it stood the test of time as a novel, and how remote seemed the attitude to life implicit in it. The characters were still alive, the events were still real, but somehow the satire in it had lost its sting. It towered above most of the novels that have succeeded it as a work of art, but the magic of revelation, of prophecy, had gone.

This, I think, is because the offensive it launched has been so overwhelmingly successful that we, inheritors of the victory, can no longer recapture the zest of battle. We remember the World Fit for Heroes to Live In and the Treaty of Versailles rather than fighting to make the world safe for democracy. So much of what Butler attacked has crumbled away, leaving such a litter of debris, that it is difficult to find any exhilaration in his thrusts and sallies.

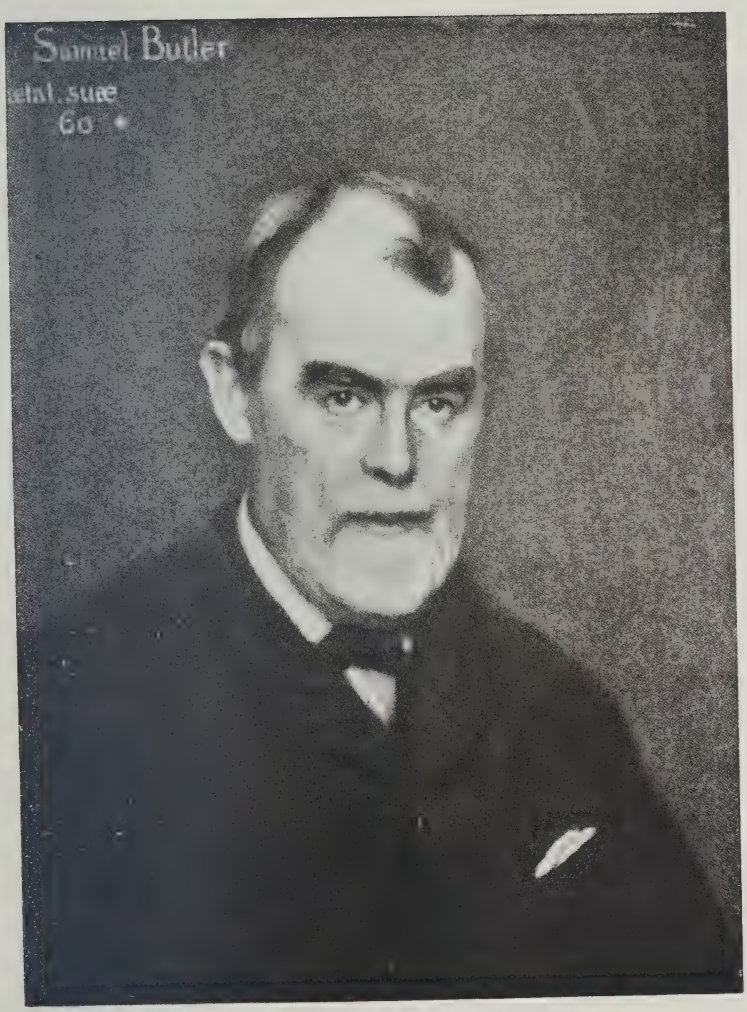
We are sprung from Butler's loins, his progeny; and as he revolted against his father, we revolt against him. This revolting! — how interminable it is! I sometimes think that hypocrisy, like matter, cannot be created or destroyed, that it is a constant, that it flows about the world filling now one shape and now another, concentrating now here and now

there, but always in bulk the same. The mistake Butler made in attacking hypocrisy, it seems to me, was to assume that it could be destroyed. Theobald cleansed, he argues, is Ernest. That is to say, Theobald's devils die with him. But they don't. They look around for a new habitation, and find it in Ernest; settle in him, and wax fat.

I ask myself what Ernest would now be, try to project the various tendencies which developed from his revolt against Theobald, see him a subscriber to the *New Statesman*, a Friend of the Soviet Union, a free-loving, free-lancing, free-thinking prig; and, upon my soul, I almost think I prefer Theobald.

A satirist should offer no alternatives. He should, like Swift, perhaps even like Shakespeare, hate everything and everyone, or, like Rabelais, love everything and everyone. If he allows himself the luxury of a scale of values, preferring this thing to that, and therefore implying the possibility of progress, his satire will wrinkle and yellow like old newspapers left in the sun. Butler did, in some moods at least, allow himself the luxury of a scale of values. As an evolutionist, as a Victorian sentimentalist (no one escapes from his times; those who think they escape are often most caught up), he believed in progress. The implication is that after Theobald came Ernest, and that Ernest was an improvement on Theobald. We, who have rumbled Ernest as Ernest rumbled Theobald, cannot be expected to accept this implication.

What I mean is that Butler was too positive to be a great satirist. Though he discarded much, he also accepted much. He discarded Christianity, for instance; but he accepted bank-notes. And, on the whole, Christianity has worn better than bank-notes. A thing like the Virgin Birth seemed to him too preposterous to be even taken seriously; but a thing like a bank balance he took as being self-evident. Most people



SAMUEL BUTLER

from a portrait in the National Portrait Gallery by Charles Gogin

to-day would find it easier to make a case for the Virgin Birth than for the Bank of England.

On the other hand, his very weakness as a satirist made him the better novelist. Satirists are seldom good novelists. Life is so full of illusions, of hopes and convictions and the romanticizing of appetites into ideals, that you have to be within it to convey an authentic impression of what it is like, whereas a satirist can only be a satirist by standing outside it. Swift's satire is still valid. It was negative enough to last. But he could never have written a good novel, let alone a great novel like *The Way of All Flesh.*

Thus I enjoyed my re-reading of *The Way of All Flesh.* If it pulled down Butler the prophet, it exalted Butler the novelist. After all, what is the test of great literature? — that it should be authentic, that it should be on a large enough scale to fit into the universe, that it should show life and death in their accoutrements — the Word made flesh. *The Way of All Flesh*, on such a test, is great literature.

Indeed, its authenticity is almost terrifying, so vividly does it portray the very procreation of this our age. Reading it is like watching one's parents beget oneself. All that goes to make us up, our world up, is in it.

For that reason, if for no other, it will continue to be read, to be important.

[1934]

E. ARNOT ROBERTSON

By
P. WESTON EDWARDS

The enjoyment to be had from most authors' books is increased by reading them in chronological order; for if they show growing skill, and an increasing maturity of judgment, the reader easily grows into a feeling of identification with the author, and takes a personal pleasure in each advance, as in the growth of a friendship. And this is particularly true with the first works of a young writer, because the less mature books often reveal more of the author's personality than the later ones.

For this reason I feel sorry for those who made their first contact with the personality of Arnot Robertson through *Ordinary Families*; they have missed the exciting middle period of an author's development; they are in danger of not understanding her books so fully as they might have done. It is not apparent from the latest book alone that Miss Robertson is in a sense a deeply religious writer. Yet it is so. Life is her god; any sort of life that exceeds mere biological continuation. With death pressing so close, any form of life is worthy of support.

There is a hint of this attitude even in *Cullum*. That very bitter love story is told from the point of view of the deserted and suffering heroine; but there is no attempt to disguise the truth that the heroine suffered through her own hard narrowness of mind. Cullum, the brilliant liar and poseur, was forced

to impose upon her through fear, because she had no pity toward weakness and no tolerance of any standards but her own. The many positive qualities of his mind were not enough for her, who thought that life should have always the same ingredients. She experienced a heart-breaking shock when Cullum could no longer keep up the pretences that she alone had made necessary.

This first novel has suffered from change of fashion. It may not seem so good in 1934 as it did in 1927. Its young people, who seemed then rather fine in their direct outspoken approach to life, seem now a little crude and very rude. Also, the author's main weakness in writing is apparent here: an excessive difference of tone and manner between the telling of the story and the observation of contemporary manners with which she fills up the chapters where the story dawdles.

Of this failing she appears to have been fully aware. The theme of *Three Came Unarmed* disguises it; *Four Frightened People* seems almost designed to utilize the failing. In the first of these, the three young people whom she brings from the wilds of Borneo to confront the mature civilization of Western Europe find themselves confronting people of several different types, whom they meet in disconnected scenes and moments, and among whom they fail to find a common guiding principle. The different manner used for this disjointed background helps with the presentation of the three young people as something utterly foreign.

The element in this book which is most powerfully treated is the herd-spirit; but the element most characteristic of the author is the treatment of Mrs. Evered's passion for Freedom and Truth as just another stale conventionality, lifeless and rigid. The scene in the book which is really the most significant is that in which Mrs. Evered's daughter reveals her unlicensed pregnancy and declares that she will not have her behaviour made right by her mother's shallow conventions

while her own conscience tells her that it was wrong. It is a tribute to the author's writing that this incident has no flavour of satirical inversion but occurs as a natural and indeed inevitable part of the story.

In *Four Frightened People*, what I have called Miss Robertson's 'religion' first appears as the main theme. Her four characters, driven by fear of the plague to track their way through a Malayan jungle, continue to be intellectual people — at least, the three who were intellectual before continue so — and engage in abstract discussion repeatedly throughout the journey. The two manners in which the two aspects of their minds are described help to heighten the contrast and to emphasize the simultaneous aliveness of the characters on two very different planes. The fourth character, frightened neither by plague nor jungle, and as impervious to thought as to fear, is the strongest and most cheerful; but the author's conviction that such people stand for death rather than life is strikingly brought out by making the others abandon her in the jungle. No situation could have been contrived which would show more strongly the loathing of intelligent minds for those who are dead, but still bright.

In *Ordinary Families* Miss Robertson has abandoned the easier contrast between living minds and fossilized minds, and gone to the more subtle study of people who have all partly died. The narrator's relatives and their neighbours are alive and accomplish something in the world; but they have developed a narrow patriotism for the things they happen to understand, and fail to support the rest, which is also life. They appear in this book like politicians guilty of creating parties within the state.

This is a theme for an author's maturity. Here, too, the distinction of manner between the main subject and the incidentals has disappeared, and everything is firmly held together by admirable prose. It seems therefore that in 1935

anyone who writes about Miss Robertson is in the odd position of summing up at the beginning of the case; the best is to come.

It is lucky that *Ordinary Families* made her known to so many readers, now, at the real beginning of her career; for the contest between life and death in the mind and the heart, in which her loyalties seem so deeply involved, is full of significance for her contemporaries. Life, as revealed by the power to grow, is the only thing left to this generation on which to hang its faith.

WILD OATS

By

W. H. Davies

How slowly moves the snail, that builds
A silver street so fine and long:
I move as slowly, but I leave
Behind me not one breath of song.
Dumb as a moulting bird am I,
I go to bed when children do,
My ale but two half-pints a day,
And to *one* woman I am true.
Oh! what a life, how flat and stale —
How dull, monotonous and slow!
Can I sing songs in times so dead —
Are there no more wild oats to sow?

[1922]

RECREATION—READING

By
GEOFFREY WEST

Once, filling in a form for some lesser *Who's Who*, I set opposite the query 'Recreation?', instead of the more manly alternatives of Golf, Watching Test Matches, or Shooting Wild Elephants in Iceland, the more honest one of Reading. And ever since, ever and again someone will turn up to assert: 'Oh, but you, a regular reviewer, a *professional* reader almost, can't possibly mean that!' — and when I repeat that I do, to tell me that I must mean Light Reading then, perhaps Wodehouse or Wallace. No, I've then to say, I'm probably the one person in the English-speaking world who finds neither Wodehouse funny nor Wallace thrilling. Can't you realize, I ask, the peculiar pleasure of reading a book as it were off duty, in sheer enjoyment of the book itself without thought of subsequent comment? But what — what *sort* of — book? Honestly, almost any, allowing it to be tolerably well written and authentically concerned with real life in some aspect. Light, heavy, near, remote, long, short — what does it matter so long as it's genuine?

There the conversation generally ends. My friend goes away, thinking me a liar or a highbrow, and wondering which is worse. But one, the other day, from cunning or curiosity, proved more persistent. He demanded a practical test, to take at random some fairly heterogeneous list of books — perhaps some publisher's series — and to put me on my honour to say

which among them I had read or could read with honest pleasure. I'd made my requisites life and — well, some degree of literary merit. In fact, Life and Letters. Right, then, the Life and Letters Series let it be, with perhaps the same publisher's Academy Books thrown in for makeweight.

An excellent choice, I declared, from my point of view, for the former series at least was an old favourite of mine, a pleasure to the eye from the neat green gold-lettered binding of uniform height inward throughout the well-printed pages, the volumes being usually illustrated, and sometimes (I believed) with pictures not to be found in the more expensive editions.

HE 'To the point! We know they're all nice to look at — are they all nice to read?'

MYSELF 'Naturally there are some I'd jump to first! Take the biographical volumes, for example — the series' strongest section, nearly twenty out of the sixty or so books in print. Frankly, I'd go quickest to, let's say, J. W. N. Sullivan's *Beethoven*, Hugh I'Anson Fausset's *Coleridge*, and Middleton Murry's *Son of Woman* and *The Life of Jesus* because I esteem them all books about truly great men by truly vital writers. Perhaps Herbert Read's *Wordsworth* should go in the same category. Edwin Muir's *John Knox* is good reading for a solemn hour, Katharine Anthony's *Catherine the Great* for a lively. Among the rest, on Ruskin, Alice Meynell, the Brontë sisters (Ernest Dimnet says all that a Frenchman can), Leonardo da Vinci, Cromwell, Nelson, and Lamb, they're all worth reading, and they're all well written. The breezy Americanisms of Paul de Kruif's portraits of scientists in *Microbe Hunters* distract some people, but after all he's got the goods and delivers it in his own if Hollywood way. I'll admit I prefer the more conventional studies of Ludwig's *Genius and Character* or G. R. Stirling Taylor's *Seven Nineteenth-Century Statesmen*.'

HE 'A challenge! — what of Sidney Dark's *Five Deans*?'

MYSELF 'A hit! I never did like Deans!'

HE 'The autobiographies I'll have to give you. The War stuff, Cummings' *The Enormous Room* and Graves' *Goodbye to All That*, you pressed on me yourself; the two *Trader Horn* volumes need no bush; and whatever your views on Eton I know you take off your hat to Percy Lubbock's *Shades of Eton* and *Earlham*. But come out into the wilds! What about the real rough stuff — *Ralph Rashleigh*, Blair Niles' book on Devil's Island, Eugene Wright's *The Great Horn Spoon* or Guy Murchie's *Men on the Horizon*?'

MYSELF 'They're fun when they keep hard-boiled. It's only when they turn sentimental or romantic that my eyelids grow a little weary. But if you want some of the best of the greatest travel book in the world, try *Passages from Arabia Deserta;* or, in lighter mood, Sam Butler's *Alps and Sanctuaries*. I swallow the tough guys, but I come back to these, and to — nearer home — Henry Williamson's *Village Book* and *Labouring Life*. Life *and* Letters in all of 'em!'

HE 'Well, time and the list grow short. It's no use tackling you on Holbrook Jackson's *The Eighteen Nineties* or Rebecca West's literary criticism. *Mother India* and J. C. Powys's *The Meaning of Culture*. . . .'

MYSELF 'His best book — a first-rate exposition of a second-rate philosophy.'

HE '. . . I see on your shelves. America is your passion, so André Siegfried's volume is out of it. Friedrich Sieburg's *Is God a Frenchman?* you said you'd read for the title's sake. Maurice Hindus on Russia is always good, and *Humanity Uprooted* and *Red Bread* are among his best. What's left? – Bercovici on Gipsies, Clough Williams-Ellis on Architecture, James Bone on London, Woolley on archaeology, Langdon-Davies and Margaret Kornitzer on Women. I say! . . .'

MYSELF 'Not stumped yet! But don't leave out one of the best — Graham Wallas's *Art of Thought*.'

HE 'I give up. Here, let's try the Academy Books. But what are they — you don't call seven-and-six a cheap edition, eh?'

MYSELF 'For what they give you, yes. There're some of them, those tall solid demy octavo volumes in maroon cloth. They really are reprints of expensive books of permanent interest. The publisher's phrase but a true one!'

HE 'I see you're well away with them already! Certainly they don't lack variety — Francis Hackett's famous biography of *Henry VIII*, Levine on *Stalin*, Malcolm Elwin on *Charles Reade*, others on Robert Walpole, Hume, Talleyrand, Wagner, George IV, Roosevelt and Napoleon. And you always could swallow any amount of biography, couldn't you?'

MYSELF 'Not just "Napoleon", please. Bainville on Napoleon. There's a difference. And you've overlooked one of the most interesting — Denis Gwynn on Roger Casement. It's not all biography, though. You'll find history and social life well if not identically mixed in Dibelius's *England*, Sir George MacMunn on the Indian Frontiers, a French marquise's *Recollections of the Revolution and the Empire* (she lived in America too), and for that matter in Frank Mumby's *Publishing and Bookselling*.'

HE 'You win! But isn't there even *one* nigger in *either* wood-pile?'

MYSELF 'I gave you one — the Deans! And if you must know — among the Life and Letters books — I'll read Belloc's essays, *A Conversation with an Angel*, till the cows come home, but when he becomes controversial, as in *How the Reformation Happened*, well . . . But that's purely personal. Plenty of people no doubt think it a splendid book. As, for that matter, no doubt it is!'

BUTLERIANA

(Further extracts from the Note-Books of Samuel Butler)

MYSELF AND POSTERITY

Posterity will not have imagination enough to tell it what a fool I am, and if I dangle enough works before it, it may be caught by some of them. Why I should wish to trouble posterity — what harm it has done me for which I would punish it; what good for which I would reward it — I know not; all I know is that I mean catching posterity if I can.

THE PHENOMENA OF BEING BORN

There are some men so ignorant of what gives them pleasure that they cannot be said ever to have been really born as living beings at all. They present some of the phenomena of having been born; they reproduce, in fact, so many of the ideas which we associate with having been born that it is hard not to think of them as living beings; but in spite of all appearances the central idea is wanting.

KNOWLEDGE AND CONVENIENCE

We should not aim at knowledge — this is beyond our grasp. We should aim at that way of looking at things, which will give us least trouble, as fitting in most harmoniously without other ideas.

SCOTCH MARRIAGES

A law student (in a viva voce examination) was asked what was necessary to render a marriage valid in Scotland. He replied: 'For a marriage to be valid in Scotland it is absolutely necessary that it should be consummated in the presence of two policemen.'

MR. GARNETT

as all who know him must admit, is one of the most amiable and benign of men; he is also very tall. One day I saw him stretching himself to his utmost to reach one of the top shelves of the Reading Room reference library, so I said, 'Why, Mr. Garnett, you are the very embodiment of Milton's line "Of linked sweetness long drawn out".' He was much pleased.

LUCKY OR UNLUCKY

A sensible man commonly knows no more whether his life on the whole has been lucky or unlucky, than whether he is plain or handsome.

ALCOHOL

The question is whether our ancestors have been so long accustomed to alcohol that it is easier now to go on with it and make the best of it, or whether the habit is so recent that it can be broken easily and without disturbance. I think decidedly the first of these two alternatives is the right one.

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Want of money, bad health, bad temper, chastity, family ties, knowing that you know things, and believing in the Christian religion.

MENDELSSOHN'S SONGS WITHOUT WORDS

Jones said it was a mercy they had no words.

WHEN A THING

is old, broken, and useless, we throw it on the dust-heap, but when it is sufficiently old, sufficiently broken, and sufficiently useless, we give money for it, put it into a museum, and read papers over it which people come long distances to hear.

[1934]

LIAM O'FLAHERTY

By
A. E.

The Black Soul overwhelms one like a storm. It is the most elemental thing in modern Irish literature, written with amazing energy from the first page to the last, the sentences following each other like gusts of wind. It is less a tale than the morose brooding of a sick soul coming back gradually to health. The plot is simple. The Stranger comes to a western island, soul-shocked because of three years in the Great War and a delirium of reckless living which followed after. He lodges on the island with Red John, whose wife, Mary, contemptuous of her lout of a husband, falls in love with the morose Stranger. The Stranger hardly sees her at first because of that blackness of soul which is upon him. The gradual lifting of the black cloud first restores bodily desire to him, and he meets the desire of the woman, half hating her and himself. In the end he comes to love her. As the Stranger comes to sanity, Red John, made wild by suspicion of his wife, becomes insane, and the book ends with his death and the flight of the Stranger with Mary from the island. Here and there other people intrude on the passion of these three, but they are as beings on the outer circle of an intensity they cannot enter. The whole book, one might say, is made out of the release from madness of one soul and the entry into madness of another soul, with the woman as the pivot round which

one wheels back to life as the other reels to death. I call the book elemental, because in the three, hardly deflected by the moral or cultural ideas which exercise some control over human desire with most, the primitive passions run free. The Stranger, more educated than the other two, has flickerings of social conscience, sickenings of soul at what he does; but these restrain him but little, and we feel the tale, with slight alterations of external circumstances, might be pushed back two thousand years or earlier to the time of neolithic humanity, and it would have moved us as much with its power and truth. War thrusts humanity back to the passions of the Stone Age, and one primitive passion awakens another until all the veneer is gone, and the enchantment cast upon the soul by avatars, prophets, saints to bring it to the spirit loses its power. Does what remains appear evil? No. One only feels that there is a kind of primitive sanity in this elemental life, the sanity of animals who live and mate by instinct. The Stranger and Mary go on such a path, tending to what we know not. They are not civilized. She, not at all, and he, hardly, had entered that mid-world of soul in which the majority live in a conflict between body and spirit, endeavouring as they may to subdue the first to the last. Nothing like *The Black Soul* has been written by any Irish writer. It reminds us at times of the *Barbaric Tales* of Fiona Macleod, but the latter approached the elemental in humanity as an artist rather than as one who expresses something in the self. The book reminds us, again, of Dostoievsky, though it is not crowded with characters as the novels of that great master are, but it has something of the delirium of feeling which moves us when his characters unrestrained lay bare their souls to us, and we recognize in them what we would be if the spiritual law had not its noose round our necks, and was not always constraining us for some greater end than can be attained by yielding to elemental impulse. The writer seems

to be familiar with every wild mood of sea and sky, and they echo with their wildness the passion in the heart of the characters. They recall to us the ancient sympathy between the spirit of man and the spirit of nature asserted in Irish legend. When the high king was in danger the three great waves of Erin responded, the wave of Truth, the wave of Rury, and the long, slow, white foaming wave of Cleena. So do wind and water seem to shout or swell about the characters in *The Black Soul.* The future development of Liam O'Flaherty will be watched with intense interest. Can he write out of more than one mood? If he can write as powerful a book with new atmosphere and circumstance his name may be very great in Irish literature.

[1924]

ENGLISH LIBERAL

By

GEOFFREY TAYLOR

'I think' thought Sam Butler,
'Truth ever lies
In mean compromise.'
What could be subtler
Than the thought of Sam Butler

BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHIES

A list of the principal books by the authors discussed in the earlier parts of this book, together with the dates of their original publication by Jonathan Cape.

HUGH LOFTING (Page 13)

The Story of Dr. Dolittle (1922)
The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle (1923)
Dr. Dolittle's Post Office (1924)
Dr. Dolittle's Circus (1925)
Dr. Dolittle's Zoo (1926)
Dr. Dolittle's Caravan (1927)
Dr. Dolittle's Garden (1928)
Dr. Dolittle in the Moon (1929)
Dr. Dolittle's Return (1933)

MARY WEBB (Pages 17 and 132)

Precious Bane (1924)
The Golden Arrow (1928)
Gone to Earth (1928)
Seven for A Secret (1928)
The House in Dormer Forest (1928)
Poems and the Spring of Joy (1928)
Armour Wherein he Trusted (1929)

LIDDELL HART (Page 21)

'T. E. Lawrence': In Arabia and After (1934)

HENRY WILLIAMSON (Page 24)

The Pathway (1928)
The Village Book (1930)
The Labouring Life (1932)
The Linhay on the Downs (1934)

ERIC LINKLATER (Page 27)

White-Maa's Saga. A Novel (1929)
Poet's Pub. A Novel (1930)
A Dragon Laughed. Poems (1930)
Juan in America. A Novel (1931)
Ben Jonson and King James. A Biography and Portrait (1931)
The Men of Ness. A Novel (1932)
Magnus Merriman. A Novel (1934)
The Devil's in the News. A Play (1934)
Ripeness is All. A Novel (1935)

ERNEST DIMNET (Page 31)

The Brontë Sisters (1927)
The Art of Thinking (1929)
What We Live By (1932)
My Old World (1935)

ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS (Page 34)

The Time of Man (1926)
My Heart and My Flesh (1928)
The Great Meadow (1930)
A Buried Treasure (1932)
The Haunted Mirror (1933)

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'Fares Please!' An Omnibus Volume containing *The Black Dog*, *Silver Circus*, and *The Field of Mustard* (1931)
Nixey's Harlequin (1931)
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Constance Markievicz. A Biography (1934)

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Later Days. A Pendant to *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (1925)
The Adventures of Johnny Walker, Tramp (1926)
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The Poems of W. H. Davies (Complete Edition) (1934)
Love Poems (1935)

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Variety (1933) (out of print)
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Women and Children Last (1931)
Oxford-London-Hollywood. (An Omnibus Volume containing *Twenty-Five*, *Are they the Same at Home?* and *The Star Spangled Manner*) (1931)
Evensong (1932)
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For Adults Only (1932)
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Echo de Paris. A Dialogue (1923)
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Angels and Ministers. Including also *Possession* and *Dethronements* (1926)
Ironical Tales. Stories (1926)
Cornered Poets. Dialogues (1929)
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Life and Habit (1921)
Luck, or Cunning? (1921)
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Erewhon, or, Over the Range (1922)
A First Year in Canterbury Settlement, Etc. (1922)
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Mr. Gilhooley. A Novel (1926)
The House of Gold. A Novel (1929)
Two Years (1930)
I Went to Russia (1931)
The Puritan. A Novel (1932)

Complete Lists of The Travellers' Library (Page 153), Florin Books (Page 199), Life and Letters Series (Page 210), and Academy Books (Page 210) can be obtained from the publishers.

SAILING BOOKS

It was unfortunately impossible to include in *Then and Now* an article on the numerous books on sailing subjects published by Jonathan Cape. Any reader interested in these books can obtain, post free on application to the publisher, an 8-page prospectus of these. They include: 'Deep Water and Shoal' by William Albert Robinson; 'Racundra's First Cruise' by Arthur Ransome; 'Horizon' by Ken Attiwill; 'The Cruise of The Teddy, by Erling Tambs; 'Bowsprit Ashore' by Alexander Bone; 'The Blue Tunnyman' by Andrew Andrews; 'White Sails Crowding' by C. M. Butlin; 'North-West by North' by Dora Birtles; 'Sailing Across Europe' by Negley Farson; 'Log of the Sea' by Felix Riesenberg.

THEN

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